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THE NEGRO AWAKENING
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IN

PLAINFIELD, N. J.

by

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Preface

I thank my father, mother and brother Warren for their love, and wonderful assistance in those difficult last weeks.

To those people in Plainfield - Everett Lattimore, Charles Miller, Elfert Burfeind, George Mutnick, Eugene Hampson, my friends on the Courier-News - I thank you all for your cooperation, patience and interest.

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INTRODUCTION

I

Plainfield, New Jersey is an urban community of 45,000. Bound to a suburban tradition and engulfed in a suburban milieu, it is firmly suburban in point of view. A massive influx of Negroes to Plainfield in the past 15 years, doubling the non-white population, has jeopardized the city's desirability for whites. It has, indeed, jeopardized the city's long-standing established order. The Negro Awakening, which can be dated from 1961, has heightened the suburban whites' anxieties. It has weakened his loyalty to Plainfield and has confirmed his suspicion the Negro will undermine that attachment completely.

Plainfield Negroes comprise approximately 25 per cent of the city's population. In recent years, their militant demands have achieved for them a social visibility the white mind had previously denied them. Highly inspired by the rising expectations of black people both in the United States and Africa, the Plainfield Negro has thrust himself into political activity, broken sacred segregated housing patterns, demanded re-alignment of the public school system and staged disruptive public protests. Negro activism, given Plainfield's tradition and milieu, is incongruous and potentially irreconcilable.

The Negro Awakening seemingly is "out of place" in

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Plainfield, because the generalized absence from both sight and mind of the American Negro and other low-income minorities has always been one of the sub-conscious allurements of suburban life. The white middle class has sought in suburbia better schools, comfortable neighborhoods, honest personalized government and most important, status. Implicit in the first are classes of well-disciplined, high-achieving children; in the second is homogeneity, oft-times ethnic, as in Plainfield, but fundamentally racial; in the third is absence of partisanship especially that engendered by racial hostility; in the fourth is residential separation from the distasteful non-whites, who crowd the urban centers.

The Awakening's potentially volatile effect on the suburban community depends on the inflexibility of white middle class values in regard to the Negro threat. The Negro's efforts for inclusion are of necessity destined to be more strenuous than those of any other minority in the struggle for acceptance into Plainfield's mainstream. He is, therefore, bound to offend some white sensibilities. Moreover, the hostility and fear the Negro still conjures up in white minds will be awesomely difficult to overcome.

The Negro has been present in Plainfield ever since its incorporation 95 years ago. While immigrant minorities have thrust their way into political, economic and social

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equality, the Negro has been systematically withheld from participation in these compromises. The Plainfield Negro for many years knew his place. He asked for little; he was docile. In recent years this has changed markedly, but white attitudes have lagged.

If the Plainfield white were to maintain a fixed attachment to suburban values and were not to soften his hostility toward interracial living, flight from the brown menace would be imperative. Assuming the whites' widely-held blanket fear of Negroes, the intrusion of the non-white would appear to undo much of the suburban security and status Plainfield had offered. Let us see why, fear by fear.

The bussing of low-income Negro children into high status neighborhood schools would most assuredly disrupt classes, hinder the white child's learning and endanger his safety. Thus, the "better schools" attraction would be destroyed. The purchase of nearby homes by Negroes would bring in "bad influences", lower the neighborhood's status, and cause property values to plummet disastrously.

The political emergence of the Negro, if carried too far, could be extremely dangerous also. He would most likely work to attract more Negroes to the city and be too liberal with the taxpayer's money, spending undue amounts to assist

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"his kind." He would tend to turn every issue into a racial one, creating bitter partisanship. Policy-making by Negroes, of course, could not be tolerated, because so few are capable. Finally, in regard to status, what self-respecting white would live in a neighborhood with so many Negroes nearby? Nourished by ignorance, bigotry and limited observation, these hitherto inflexible assumptions underlie the worries of the Plainfield suburbanite.

Still other impulses make more urgent the confrontation of Plainfield's greatest problem. Suburbanites are persons, or recent offspring of persons, who once forsook neighborhood ties to search for the suburban dream. This acknowledged example of residential mobility in pursuit of status and security further motivates a white exodus. Under these conditions the attachment of the suburban resident is much greater to suburban values than to his suburban city - Plainfield.

An inherent feature of suburbia, inter-municipal competition, also works against Plainfield's maintenance of its white middle class. In the maze of small suburban political jurisdictions, each municipality is out for itself. Each must outbid the other for lucrative ratables, high value construction and high-income residents. At one time Plainfield

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was in a formidable position. Many circumstances have forced it into the desperately competitive scramble with the eight smaller communities contiguous to it and to several others just beyond its borders. All these other municipalities currently possess one advantage in this suburban struggle - no Negroes and no racial problems.

Plainfield, like many small central cities in similar straits, faces an uphill sociological challenge, one with which the city will have to experiment to succeed. Plainfield's white residents must try to adapt themselves to the rapidly emerging social reality of interracial living. If they cannot, the Old Plainfield will inexorably blow away and take root somewhere else.

CHAPTER ONE

THE DOMESTIC YEARS

CHAPTER ONE

Most of us would like to emulate the old Negro's prescription for happy living: 'Never try to unscrew the unscrutable [sic] and always aim to cooperate with the inevitable.'¹

Old Plainfield was once an exclusive, high-income suburban city. Through the years, the city has grown, its economy has broadened, its population has become more heterogeneous and its problems more complex. Yet the legacy of the political, economic and sociological thought of Old Plainfield lingers on and its impact on current conflicts is still noticeable. Plainfield is a rapidly changing city and the values of Old Plainfield seem to be less and less applicable.

Beginning as a small trading center on the main stagecoach trail between New York and Philadelphia, the city, incorporated in 1869, grew into one of the New York metropolitan area's most luxurious bedroom suburbs. The signal for that growth was the complete connection of the city to New York by railroad. Located 24 miles from New York and due south from the picturesque Watchung Hills, Plainfield at one time was a natural vacation haunt of New York's top-rung executives. Hotels such as the stately "Netherwood" catered to this clientele. The attractions of quasi-rural living and the convenience

¹Harold G. Lapsley, History of Plainfield (Plainfield, N.J., 1942), 44.

of commuter rail transportation convinced many of these visitors to choose Plainfield as a home site. Four railroad passenger stations, scattered along the city's east-west axis, put the 43-minute commuter's ride to New York City within convenient reach of all residents. In the early days these commuters were served by frequent trains of the Central Railroad of New Jersey, the Baltimore and Ohio, and the Philadelphia and Reading.² Plainfield's railroad-oriented growth was not unique. Suburban development first took place along railroad lines and was usually limited to a 2-mile radius from the station.³ Plainfield could point to its location on the main trunk of the Jersey Central, one of the star-like appendages emanating from the central urban core, for its early importance.⁴

To the wealthy businessmen seeking escape from his crowded and disturbing urban environment, Plainfield offered itself as the "ideal suburban city". It claimed to be "one of the most noted suburban communities in the state" with an "abundance of fresh clean air".⁵ It boasted five golf clubs in and around the city and even in the 1920s, it held its school system as "among

²New York Herald, April 19, 1922.

³Charles E. Stonier, "Problems of Suburban Transport Services," The Suburban Community, William Dobriner, ed., (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1963), 327.

⁴Leo F. Schnore, "Metropolitan Growth and Decentralization," loc. cit., 3.

⁵Plainfield Area Chamber of Commerce, Plainfield: Beautiful Progressive (Plainfield, n.d.).

the finest in America". Plainfield was then a fancy town and its exclusiveness was one of its main allurements. For many years the citizens of Plainfield jealously guarded this asset.⁶

The early establishment of a Negro community in the city stems from the high-income status of Plainfield's early residents. A corollary of this concentration of wealth was the demand for servants and personal services -- full-time domestics, day workers, gardeners, chauffeurs, dressmakers, and laundresses. Because of their low educational achievement and limited choice of occupation, Negroes supplied an available labor pool for these menial jobs. In 1870, 203 Negroes resided in Plainfield, comprising four per cent of the population.⁷

As Plainfield's population continued its upward surge, its reputation as a luxurious suburban community enabled it to maintain an influx of high income people. As a consequence, the demand for domestic and related service help also increased. By 1900, the Negro population had multiplied to more than seven times its 1870 total. Commonly, a Plainfielder, vacationing in the South, would meet a Negro attendant whose work and manner impressed him. Oft-times the wealthy Plainfielder would offer the Negro a job as a household servant and urge he

⁶New York Herald, April 19, 1922.

⁷State of New Jersey Interracial Committee, Department of Institutions and Agencies. Plainfield: Survey of Negro Life in New Jersey, Report XX (Newark, 1932), 2. (This work will be cited hereafter as 1932 Social Work Survey.)

bring his family with him. If the Negro accepted, he would accompany his employer to Plainfield and settle there.

When Negroes arrived in Plainfield, they generally moved into neighborhoods occupied by low income whites, mainly the foreign-born. These areas were conveniently close to the homes of their wealthy employers. The primary areas of initial settlement were clustered about West Fourth Street between Liberty Street and Plainfield Avenue and on East Third Street between Roosevelt and Berckman Avenues. Both neighborhoods lie close to the tracks of the railroad, a factor which accounted for their unattractiveness. The most ambitious Negroes of this generation built their own homes on Liberty Street and Spooner Avenue between West Fourth and West Second Streets.

Once the Negro community had grown beyond a handful and its church life had been established, Plainfield began to act as a focal point for Negroes emigrating from the South or from nearby states as Pennsylvania and Maryland.

The racial and ethnic composition of the Plainfield population had showed signs of radical change after the First World War. Industrialization in the Plainfield area drew immigrant Italians. Burgeoning commercial opportunities attracted Jewish retail merchants and domestic jobs continued to bring in Negroes. It was mainly these economic changes

which initiated the transition of Plainfield from a basically homogeneous, exclusive suburban community to a polyglot, complex city. Of Plainfield's 27,700 residents in 1920, 19.9 per cent were foreign-born white and 8.8 per cent Negro.⁸ Although the Negro population maintained a near-constant percentage of the total from 1900 to 1920 (the foreign-born white influx was at its crest then), the absolute number of non-whites grew by 68 per cent from 1,450 to 2,445. In the following decade the Negro community registered a 49.2 per cent increase. Some 3,648 Negroes resided in the city by 1930.

Breakdown of Population White and Negro,
Plainfield 1870-1930

Year	White	Negro	Percentage Negro	Percentage Increase of Negroes	Total Popula- tion	Percentage Increase
1870	4,892	203	4.0	--	5,095	--
1880	7,632	493	6.0	142.8	8,125	59.5
1890	10,620	647	5.7	31.3	11,267	38.7
1900	13,919	1,450	9.4	124.1	15,369	36.4
1910	18,717	1,833	8.9	26.3	20,550	33.7
1920	25,255	2,445	8.8	33.4	27,700	34.8
1930	30,774	3,648	10.6	49.2	34,422	24.3

Source: Compiled from data in the State of New Jersey Inter-racial Committee, Department of Institution and Agencies, Plainfield: Survey of Negro Life in New Jersey, Report XX, 1932, p. 2 and U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1960 PC(1) - 32B, N.J. Table 12, p. 32.

⁸U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1930 PC(2), N.J., Table 15, p. 29.

A 1932 New Jersey Conference of Social Work Survey revealed only 10.6 per cent of Plainfield Negroes, 16 years or over, were born in New Jersey and only 7.2 per cent of the total were natives of the city. The majority (54.1 per cent) reported birthplaces in South Atlantic States, the most prevalent being Virginia with 44.4 per cent. These figures reflect the rapid influx of migrating Negroes into the Plainfield area during the first 30 years of this century.

The same survey described the dispersion of Negro housing occupancy in the city. The beginning of the city's so-called "Gilded Ghetto" in the East End was already taking form. Middle class Negro homeowners resided on East Second Street, George Street, Geneva Place and St. Mary's Avenue, all in the East End. Other middle class Negro families lived on Berkeley Terrace and Carlisle Terrace in the far northeastern end of the city and Spooner Avenue, near the extreme western limits of housing available to Negroes in the West End. Several other small enclaves existed in the Second Ward adjacent to the high-income Sleepy Hollow area. Negroes could be found on Lake Street and Webster Place in the Second Ward but for many years were unable to extend housing opportunities to surrounding blocks. The most densely populated Negro sections were to be found in the heart of the city extending along the railroad tracks, spreading both east and west from Park Avenue.

The streets most heavily populated by non-whites were Cottage Place, South Second Street, West Fourth Street from Plainfield Avenue to John Street, West Third Street from Plainfield Avenue to New Street, and on Plainfield Avenue. In many cases the housing on these blocks was of poor quality.

The geographical distribution of Plainfield Negroes did "not differ so much from the pattern found in other New Jersey cities of similar size", the 1932 social work survey noted. "While there is residential segregation by selection and public approbation, a number of homeowners occupy residences that are not located in the Negro area" (e.g. Webster Place, Lake Street).⁹

If Plainfield's non-white housing distribution did not differ much from patterns in other cities, its percentage of homes owned by Negro families did. Throughout the state only 24.3 per cent of Negro families owned their own homes. In Plainfield the 1932 survey sample indicated more than 50 per cent of Plainfield Negroes were homeowners.* The early establishment of dispersed Negro home ownership made later efforts to open nearby blocks to Negroes somewhat easier.

*The statistics of the 1932 Social Work Survey are not definitive but are taken from a sampling made of 74 Negro families in Plainfield. All 1932 employment and income are derived from this source.

⁹1932 Social Work Survey, 4.

The main source of employment for Plainfield Negroes in the early 1930s was still domestic service, yet the city's non-whites fared better economically than other non-whites in New Jersey. The median weekly income of a non-white Plainfielder exceeded that of the average non-white family in New Jersey by \$14.33. The Plainfield median was \$36.50. The heavy employment of Negro female domestics, an important source of family support, compensated Plainfield non-white females with a median weekly wage of \$14.00, \$4.76 higher than the state median. Plainfield Negro men topped their state counterparts by \$14.47 per week.

Of 68 male Negro workers interviewed in the survey, the preponderant majority were employed in semi-skilled and unskilled occupations. The breakdown is as follows:¹⁰

trade	18	26.5%
manufacturing and mechanical ...	16	23%
personal and domestic service ..	16	23%
transport	15	22%
professional employees	2	3%
clerical	1	1.5%

The working females surveyed were overwhelmingly employed in personal and domestic service. The breakdown of the 42 non-white female workers interviewed is as follows:

¹⁰Ibid., 5.

full-time domestics	16	38%
day workers	11	26%
laundresses	10	12%
dressmakers	3	7%
clerical employees	1	2%
professional worker	1	2%

As might be expected in the 1932 social milieu of suburban Plainfield, the local employment bureaus reported a much higher proportion of whites placed in jobs because "the public considers them more reliable."¹¹ The largest single employers of Negro labor in the city were two lumber companies, and the Samoset Laundry.¹² Other common occupations for Negro men were as chauffeurs, taxi drivers, coal truck drivers, ash carters, gardeners and store porters. Women, beside their domestic work, could possibly procure jobs in the laundry or as department store elevator operators.

In the summer of 1931, 21 Negroes held jobs under federal, state or municipal government in Plainfield. There was one police officer, one letter carrier, one nurse, one playground worker, 10 janitors and seven laborers. Teachers and clerical workers commuted out of town. Listed under the heading "professionals and tradesmen" were three physicians, two dentists, one pharmacist, two social workers, five ministers, one printer, a tailor, a mechanic, a dry cleaning establishment operator, two barbers, and three beauty parlor operators.

¹¹Ibid., 4.

¹²Ibid., 5.

Religion was the central force in the Negro's social life. In 1932 six major churches served the spiritual needs of the community: three Baptist, one African Methodist Episcopal, an Episcopal, a Presbyterian and five other "store-front" churches of the Pentecostal variety. The role of the minister as the political and social liaison between the congregation and the dominant white community was well recognized. On the political level the only Negroes with whom the white leadership was at all familiar were the ministers.

TWO STEPS FORWARD, ONE STEP BACKWARD

The two decades between the World Wars marked the emergence of the white immigrant groups into the formerly exclusive social and political life of Plainfield. In this period of assimilation and restructuring of political relationships, the Negro community was clearly left behind. As some of the more aware Negroes watched their former white neighbors move into higher status sections of the city, the Negro's own exclusion from the political, social and economic mainstream was thrown into sharper relief. There was little the Negro could do as a group to right this. To the dominant white community the place of the Negro as domestic servant was firmly ingrained. In the white's mind the Negro was comfortingly "docile".

Although still small in numbers, the Plainfield Negro community badly lacked cohesion. Many of those newly arrived from the South Atlantic states found Plainfield a tremendous improvement over their former surroundings. These people were often incapable of comprehending a better life. Others, who were not necessarily as docile, were afraid their domestic job ties would be severed in reprisal for "uppityness". Still others had come to believe the Negro did, indeed, have "his place".

The political leverage of the Negro at this time was minute. Non-whites comprised only about 10 per cent of the population. Due to their low educational level and psychological removal from the source of power, few Negroes voted. Therefore the non-whites posed no political threat to anyone. In fact, they usually voted Republican anyway.

The Negro's close occupational relationship with the dominant wealthy whites led the whites to adopt a patronizing attitude toward Negro complaints. It was generally the job of the ministers to plead for redress to local officials. The ministers were about the only Negroes commonly known by the whites.

The local branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, organized in Mt. Zion AME

Church in 1919, concerned itself with some of the broader discriminatory problems. Included in the leadership of the NAACP were the ministers and the educated lay Negroes. The most influential, and one of the most militant, leaders was Dr. Clement de Freitas. Working behind the scenes, Dr. de Freitas urged the local branch to fight discrimination even when it seemed the white community might become adamant. Nevertheless the Negroes had to move slowly. The upper-middle class Plainfield elite usually would be motivated to act on behalf of the Negro only when the national consensus pointed in that direction. The NAACP found the only way it could have discriminatory practices eliminated was by persuading the whites. The Negroes would cite favorable examples external to Plainfield and then argue that what the Negro was asking was in all fairness his right.

The 1932 report found the NAACP to be the most effective weapon of the Negro in his struggle against discrimination, but that organization "seldom ha[d] the united support of the Negro community" and only met with "some success".¹³ Generally the tone was pessimistic. It noted "astounding misunderstanding and discord between all" groups, white and Negro, Negro and Negro and white and white, about social programs for the Negro. "All efforts have reached an impasse", the survey lamented.

¹³ 1932 Social Work Survey, 16.

At the core of the Negro's problems were two inter-related factors. A failure to agree on common aspirations and courses of action by Negroes had prompted many whites to dismiss Negro complaints, because the Negroes' lack of cohesion proved they "don't know what they want". The other factor was a "general prejudice in employment and public policies which hinder the Negro."¹⁴

The NAACP's primary attention was riveted on removing the segregation in public accommodations, and the task was enormous. For instance, segregation was practiced in the city's movie and vaudeville theaters. In the Liberty Theatre, Negroes were required to sit in a certain section. They were required to sit in the gallery at the other theaters. This was eliminated in the early 1930s. Local restaurants refused to serve Negroes. The only lunch counter in downtown Plainfield that would do so was Woolworth's. Otherwise there was no "respectable" place for a Negro to dine outside his home. Even the Chinese restaurants refused to serve Negroes, but allowed them to take out ordered meals. The city's hotels would also refuse to admit Negroes. An occasional exception was made if Negroes were in the company of whites.¹⁵ Negroes were able to play the County Golf Course, but because of a "special clause in the contract"

¹⁴Ibid., 17.

¹⁵Interview with Mills S. Barnes, Feb. 16, 1964. (This will be cited hereafter as Barnes Interview).

were not permitted to play on the city's course.¹⁶

Newspaper coverage was another Negro complaint. The Negroes objected to the use of the term "darkies" and the spelling of Negro with a lower case "n". Police brutality and discrimination toward Negroes was a constant sore point. In 1932 when Negroes comprised less than 10 per cent of the population they accounted for 21.6 per cent of all arrests. One-third of those arrested were for disorderly conduct and one-fifth for drunkenness.¹⁷ The NAACP frequently charged police used a double standard in their arrest procedures, so that under similar conditions a Negro was far more likely to be arrested than was a white. The organization also tried to safeguard the rights of Negroes in courts of law.

Employment was another source of bitterness, but little could be done about it. The 1932 Social Work Survey revealed no Negroes were employed in any capacity by the Recreation Commission, an independent municipal body whose members are appointed by the Mayor and Council. Other municipal agencies hired few if any. Employment agencies explained white people considered Negroes less reliable. At Muhlenberg Hospital, the survey reported, "No Negro girls may secure nurses' training in the hospital, since the Muhlenberg administration questions the time when one can mix white and

¹⁶ 1932 Social Work Survey, 11.

¹⁷ Ibid., 10.

colored girls in the same dormitories and dining rooms."¹⁸

Education was an especially unhappy area for the Negro leadership. The Negro school population in 1931 numbered 900 of 6,700 in the whole school system or 13.4 per cent of the total. It is to be noted in 1932 "two or three of the elementary schools, especially Washington School, ha[d] a large percentage of Negro pupils."¹⁹ Then, Negroes were grumbling about the "segregated schools", counselling practices in the schools, teacher attitudes and the failure of the appointive Board of Education to hire a single Negro teacher. The Survey had the following analysis of Negro efforts and white indifference to this problem in particular:

Several members of the Negro community who have been interested in securing employment for trained colored teachers report that authorities are very set in their opinions that it will be quite a few years before a colored teacher could be employed in the Plainfield schools. However, no concerted effort has been made by Negroes to secure the appointment of a teacher of their race.²⁰

Other efforts at community action were the formation of a Negro History Club in 1929 and the Interracial Committee in 1931. The history club was a cultural group which tried to educate young Negroes in the historical accomplishments of other Negroes. The group's task was to supplement public

¹⁸Ibid., 8.

¹⁹Ibid., 9.

²⁰Ibid., 9.

school textbooks which make little mention of the Negro contribution to history.²¹ The club also sponsored lectures and dramatic programs.

Organized after a series of "bad" interracial murders had strained racial relations in the city, the Interracial Committee dedicated itself to discussing racial questions and promoting understanding between the races. The committee performed investigations of discrimination complaints. It moved to halt the creation of a colored glee club in the high school. The committee also attempted to educate local citizens on the need for national anti-lynching legislation.

THE OLIGARCHY

The political power of Plainfield was long centralized in the hands of an oligarchy of long-time Plainfield residents, usually wealthy railroad commuters. The Negroes and new immigrant groups which began to flow into Plainfield were excluded. "The power of length of residence and social status, intermixed with ethnic divisions, clearly operate[d] ... to place political predominance into the hands of the established people."²²

The city's one-party oligarchic system tended to reinforce these status differences. The control of the Plain-

²¹Barnes Interview.

²²Robert Wood, Suburbia: Its People and Their Politics (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1959), 178.

field Republican Party was by^a Protestant elite, many of whom commuted to high executive jobs in the financial district of downtown Manhattan. Membership in the Crescent Avenue Presbyterian or Grace Episcopal Churches seemed to be a prerequisite for admission to the elite. These men supported the old conviction, adopted wholeheartedly by suburbia, that good governments invariably come in small packages. They believed in giving the city honest and capable administration, while avoiding the partisan controversy of big government. The weak mayor form of government, adopted in the 19th century, fit their conception of voluntarism and limited governmental responsibility. The mayor is granted an annual \$300 stipend. Councilmen receive nothing.

The city's residential outlook and relatively high income secured a permanent majority for the Republican Party. Before the presidency of Franklin D. Roosevelt and the subsequent incursions made by Democratic parties throughout the East, the Republican oligarchy administered the city with only token opposition. Even in the middle 1930s the GOP majority on the Common Council was never threatened.

The organization which directed the local GOP was the Republican Citizen's Advisory Committee, composed of an in-group of upper income commuters and several retired

citizens. Local decisions, it is said, were made in the special "Plainfield Car" on the Jersey Central. The name most associated with the R.C.A.C. was that of Christie P. Hamilton, who served five years as chairman. When Hamilton died in 1945, the Plainfield mayor eulogized his efforts to "place in office those he thought best fitted for the work."²³ Surrounded by men of ability, wealth and status, Hamilton, the kingmaker, would handpick candidates from all sections of the city for the Republican slate. The R.C.A.C.'s decisions were not contested in the primary.

For many years the groups, excluded in this selection process, lacked the initiative and interest to oppose the R.C.A.C. nominations. Candidates chosen by the R.C.A.C., unopposed in primary, simply romped to easy victories in the November general elections. When opposition did arise, it adopted the suspect label "Democrat." Prior to the Depression, a Democrat from the working class Fourth Ward might win an occasional term, but on the whole partisanship in local politics was minimal.

Some dissension arose because the R.C.A.C. clique restricted itself to the commuter point of view. Locally employed Republicans quietly criticized the organization's after-dark view of the city and its consequent lack of res-

²³ Plainfield Courier-News, April 26, 1945.

ponsiveness to the local social and business problems. Yet these same detractors still admit the R.C.A.C. "developed a very nice town." The city managed to keep taxes reasonable, maintain attractive grounds, provide clean government and set up a highly respected educational system.²⁴ The influx of new residents, eager to conform to suburban political and social mores, and the continued success of the Republican administration and an abundant supply of capable and willing replacements, secured the party's dominance.

Comprising at most 10 per cent of the population and a much smaller proportion of the vote, the Negroes had negligible political leverage and like the other excluded groups, had little voice in municipal policy. Because the GOP was the only political organization in the city, even the Negroes flocked to it as the framework for their political activity. In 1932 four of the five Negro political organizations were affiliated with the Republican Party. They were the Women's Progressive Republican Club, the Young Men's Colored Republican Club, the Fourth Street Colored Republican Club, and the East End Colored Republican Club. The lone Democratic group was the Colored Democratic Club.²⁵ Refusing to leave a stone unturned, the local Republicans elected Negroes as district leaders in the Fourth Ward. Their job was to deliver

²⁴ Interview with Irving Velinsky, November 15, 1963.

²⁵ 1932 Social Work Survey, 15.

a sizable Negro vote in the city's least Republican ward in order to preserve the party's unanimous control of the Common Council.

A Coalition is Formed

By the mid-1930s the sweeping national success of the Democratic Party had achieved some short-lived effects on Plainfield politics. Aided by the Roosevelt landslide of 1936, the party polled nearly 45 per cent of the total vote in the mayoralty election that year, a considerable improvement over Democratic showings in previous elections. The Democratic standard bearer, John Claybrook, carried the First and Fourth Wards, a harbinger of future voting patterns in those areas of the city. A young upstart Democrat named Raymond C. Beck had won election as Fourth Ward councilman in 1933. When re-elected two years later, he was the first Democrat ever to achieve that distinction.

Although the Democratic Party improved its vote-getting power in the mid-1930s, the absence of large-scale industrial unionism in Plainfield, city chairman George Feaster's unwillingness to share with younger local lawyers the proceeds of federal patronage and the Republicans' compromise alliance with discontented First and Fourth Ward leaders braked the Democrats' growth potential.²⁶

²⁶Interview with Norman Abrams, February 1, 1964.

For many years the Republican administrations of Plainfield had been accused of non-representative government. The R.C.A.C. had been able to handpick the GOP candidates for mayor and five of the eleven council seats. Without having to make many intra-party compromises, the R.C.A.C. could dominate the Common Council. Primarily based in the Second Ward, the R.C.A.C. was able to capitalize on the high voter turnout and decisive Republican pluralities there to control the outcome of the mayoralty and three councilman-at-large races, in addition to placing the Ward's own two Republican councilmen.

This institutional insularity permitted the R.C.A.C. to leave many groups in other sections of the city divorced from City Hall policy making. The R.C.A.C.'s uncontested hold had shown signs of weakening when the Democrats made inroads in the First and Fourth Wards, the bastions of Plainfield's large Italo-American population.

From the Italian neighborhoods in the late 1930s arose the first genuine threat to R.C.A.C. hegemony. Bolstered by the in-migration of new working class groups into Plainfield, a political organization - the Anthony J. Marino Association - developed. This group embraced all white minorities excluded by the R.C.A.C. elite, and pressured to obtain certain favors and a more powerful voice in local affairs.

Started by Anthony J. Marino, a highly successful

businessman, and several of his Italian proteges, the association was an extension of Marino's American Dream, the realization of political power for the emerging Italians of Plainfield, to supplement their increasing economic strength. The Marino Association attracted persons from many disparate groups, but its driving force was concentrated in capable Italo-Americans like John Tozzi, Albert Fiorvanti and Salvador Diana. For his friends, Marino wanted political favors granted and a slice of the Republican patronage pie cut their way.

The Marino people assumed the only source which could dispense what they sought was the R.C.A.C. In turn the R.C.A.C. decided to swallow some of its pride for the sake of pragmatic compromise. Intra-party squabbling in the First and Fourth Wards was unwanted, so the oligarchy established alliance with the Marino group out of political necessity. This accord worked well; the GOP pluralities increased once more and primary battles were avoided. To repay Marino and associates, Marino was appointed vice-chairman of the R.C.A.C., Diana was made corporation counsel to the Common Council, Tozzi and Fiorvanti were nominated and elected as councilmen and Henry Clement was elected magistrate. The first of Plainfield's compromises had been accomplished. The oligarchy would soon be no more.

CHAPTER TWO

OUTSIDE THE COMPROMISES

CHAPTER TWO

The Second World War accelerated the political, social and economic adjustments of the late 1930s. The political alliance between the R.C.A.C. elite and the catch-all Marino Association operated as a smooth team for 10 years, as the city reverted back to larger Republican pluralities. While acceptance of the foreign-born and their offspring had broadened, the political power structure of the city had failed to widen its leadership base sufficiently to cope with the emerging minorities.

As increasing numbers of Catholics and Jews moved to Plainfield and gravitated toward the Republican Party, the position of the Protestant commuter clique was endangered still further. The continued refusal of the old clique to include locally employed people in the inner councils aggravated an old grievance. By 1948, it became apparent the Marino Association accord was only a stop gap measure. In that year internecine warfare between the commuters of the Second Ward and the locally-based Republicans from all parts of Plainfield flared into the open.

One major group, the Negroes, remained outside this power struggle. Their entrance into the city's political life did not begin until 10 years after World War II. It was rather easy for the Negro to be left unrepresented in

suburban Plainfield. First, the highest concentration of non-whites had always straddled West Fourth Street. That same thoroughfare bisected the West End into the Third and Fourth Wards, thereby splitting the Negro vote in half. Until the mid-1950s Negroes lived in a limited area in the West End and their numbers did not dominate any single ward. Furthermore, the higher the percentage of Negroes in the Fourth Ward, the lower dropped that ward's percentage of Plainfield's total vote. Rapidly the north side of town became increasingly non-white, while the south side remained solidly and safely white. White prejudice and fear of the Negro had induced many whites to fortify themselves from the Negro wave, mentally as well as physically. To the insulated whites, representative of the old elite, Negro problems were small ones, deserving only of small answers.

The Negro influx of the middle and late 1950s disturbed some whites, but the apparent docility of the newcomers was assuring. But national trends could not long bypass Plainfield. Soon white Plainfielders found their Negro neighbors flexing some muscles they had never dared flex before. White anxiety spread and intensified. Racial issues had become the city's most pressing. Sweeping the Negro's complaints under the rug of indifference was no longer possible.

THE WAR YEARS

The Second World War not only accelerated the socio-political emergence of Plainfield's immigrant groups, but it also effected great changes in the Negro community. In the early war years the acute labor shortage forced employers in the Plainfield area to recruit new workers. Plainfield, situated in the center of a burgeoning industrial complex, attracted a fraction of the workers to local industries. As a rule though, it served as a residential jumping-off place for workers employed by the larger operations in surrounding towns.

Conspicuous among the newcomers were Negroes. Recruited from Southern and Middle Atlantic states were semi-skilled and un-skilled Negro workers, badly needed for wartime production. Educated Negroes, trained in technical fields, were also drawn to the area. Because most surrounding communities would not permit non-whites to buy or rent homes there, the Negro residential influx was concentrated in Plainfield.

Many long-time resident Negroes felt the impact of the wartime economy too. The large non-white servant class was drastically reduced. Numbers of Negro men and women left their domestic jobs for more lucrative defense plant employment, which was available to Negroes because of the labor shortage. Negro high school youngsters rushed to share in the new-found economic opportunity. Many worked nights

in war production while attending classes in the day.

Housing presented a difficult problem throughout the war for the Negro in-migrants, but by the war's end new housing possibilities had opened. Negroes, in possession of substantial wartime savings, or anxious to utilize their G.I. rights, entered the private housing market in force. In Plainfield several Negroes bought plots of low-lying land from the city in the Hillcrest Avenue section of the East End and built homes on them. Negroes also bought and built homes in the northeast section of the city in the middle class area where they had gained a foothold years before.

In the 1940s the Fourth Ward Negro ghetto consolidated and expanded to the west. The homes on the periphery of the old Negro neighborhood were generally quite old and the white residents elderly.¹ Although lending institutions frequently gave prospective Negro buyers a troublesome time, the market on these dwellings was so active, Negroes were eventually able to purchase.

Although Plainfield was virtually the only community, between Newark and Trenton, in which Negroes could buy or rent "respectable" homes, the opportunities open to them fell far short of open occupancy. The ghettoized character of Plainfield's non-white housing patterns is supported by the

¹U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1960, PHC(1) - 105, Newark S.A.S.A., Table E-1, p. 181.

fact Negroes in 1947 occupied about five per cent of the land area of Plainfield, yet constituted more than 12 per cent of the population. Of Plainfield's 1131 blocks, 54 were predominantly Negro, or "Negro sections" as local realtors designated them.²

In the 1947 Northtown Survey sponsored by the American Jewish Congress, real estate brokers admitted that Negroes were definitely excluded from certain sections of the city. They estimated 69 per cent of all homes were completely out of bounds for the prospective Negro homeowner while another 26 per cent would be very difficult for a Negro to buy. The realtors cited the following reasons for exclusion: White neighbors opposed; brokers did not want to sell; Negroes could not afford to buy or would rather live with their own people; written or oral agreements prohibiting sales to non-whites, and finally Negroes' difficulty in obtaining mortgages from lending institutions.

Two-fifths of Plainfield Negroes were homeowners in 1947, compared to an approximate 50 per cent figure in 1932.³ A contributing factor to this proportional drop in Negro homeownership was the insufficient number of private homes opened for the non-white market. The quality of homes owned by

²American Jewish Congress, Northtown Survey on Human Relations (Plainfield, 1947), 22. (This work will hereafter be cited as 1947 Northtown Survey.)

³Ibid., 40.

Negroes compared favorably with those owned by whites, but the same was not true of Negroes' rented quarters.

The Northtown Survey reported 18 per cent of homes rented by whites (excluding Jews) were inadequate, while 47 per cent of Negro rental units were substandard. On the rental situation the survey concluded:

At higher rentals, there is a wide gap between what Negroes and majority group members get for their money ... Better quality rental housing is usually closed to Negroes, even if they can afford to pay for it.⁴

After the war, the labor shortage evaporated and some Negroes subsequently lost their jobs. The Northtown Survey found fewer Plainfield firms employing Negroes after the war than had employed them during the war. Of the local businesses which had employed Negroes during the war, 14 per cent no longer did. Nevertheless those employers still hiring Negroes, employed them in greater numbers.⁵ The pattern of better qualified Negroes being forced to leave the city to find work, so prevalent before World War II, was altered somewhat.

The survey showed the following breakdown of Negro employment in Plainfield businesses:

⁴Ibid., 45.

⁵Ibid., 18.

	<u>W</u> Total Employ- ment	<u>A</u> <u>R</u> No. Negroes Employed	<u>T</u> <u>I</u> <u>M</u> <u>E</u> Negroes Employed		<u>1</u> Total Employ- ment	<u>9</u> <u>4</u> No. Negroes Employed	<u>7</u> Negr Emple
Manufacturing	3937	324	8		3788	328	9
Retail	102	5	5		268	11	4
Commerce	153	7	5		172	7	4
Public Utilities	70	1	1		70	1	1
Public Institutions	<u>288</u>	<u>18</u>	<u>6</u>		<u>353</u>	<u>36</u>	<u>10</u>
	4541	355	8		4651	383	8

Source: Northtown Survey on Human Relations, p. 18

Plainfield firms hired Negroes primarily for service jobs and for production. In manufacturing, most of the jobs Negroes held were semi-skilled or un-skilled. Reasons given by professional, managerial, sales and clerical employers to explain the paucity of Negro employees ranged from the excuse that no Negroes had applied, to the acknowledgement that a Negro's presence would be objectionable to customers or fellow employees. The existence of hiring discrimination was well comprehended by the Negroes. Most often cited as offenders were the retail business establishments.⁶

The survey's statistical findings corroborated extensive job discrimination. At the point of average job

⁶1947 Northtown Survey, 19.

qualification, it was discovered the Negro earned \$1.08 per hour while his white counterpart (excluding Jews) earned \$1.49. The report summarized that "occupational differences between the white majority group (excluding Jews) and the Negroes are not entirely a result of educational differences; more Negroes than would be expected on the basis of education, and fewer majority members than would be expected on the basis of education, are in relatively low-skilled jobs."⁷

	<u>Majority (excluding Jews)</u>	<u>Negroes</u>
Attended grammar school but not high school	\$1.21/hour	\$1.08/hour
Attended high school but not college	\$1.53/hour	\$1.13/hour
Attended college or professional school	\$2.13/hour	\$1.32/hour

Source: Northtown Survey on Human Relations, p. 13

SMALL PROBLEMS AND SMALL ANSWERS

The non-white population in Plainfield reached 5,798 in 1950, a 17 per cent increase over the previous decennial census. The large-scale Negro influx had barely begun. In these early years of growth the socially fragmented Negro community could only muster minor efforts to improve its position in Plainfield. The disorganization of the Negro clergy, the traditional community leader, accentuated the

⁷Ibid., 13.

drift.⁸

After the pre-war departure of Dr. de Freitas, the strength of NAACP leadership declined. Moreover, the issues in many instances seemed insurmountable; the indifference of the white community was discouraging. The more militant young Negroes tended to view the organization in these years as little more than a tea-sipping clique. Indeed, the NAACP could point to few tangible accomplishments of its own and like the Negro clergy was badly torn by cleavages of opinion.

The immediate post-war goal of the Plainfield NAACP was to eliminate the color bar in restaurants, hotels, and commercial recreation facilities. The 1947 Northtown Survey reported five of eight restaurants interviewed chose to refuse service to Negroes and two hotel proprietors interviewed also revealed a similar policy. All feared loss of white clientele were they to admit colored persons. All the proprietors of the city's commercial recreation facilities admitted either to segregating or excluding Negroes.⁹ By the time of the 1949 passage of the state public accommodations law, the mounting popular consensus and persistent NAACP requests had convinced these business their old practices were no longer tenable.

⁸James A. Madison, A Survey of Recreation Needs in the 'West End' (Plainfield, 1960), 15. (This work will hereafter be cited as West End Survey.)

⁹1947 Northtown Survey, 71.

The Board of Education also yielded to a long-unfulfilled Negro request when it hired Negro teachers. In 1947, two non-white teachers were employed in the heavily Negro Washington School.¹⁰ These gains, however, were token when compared with the long list of unrectified inequities. Negroes wanted the city to hire more non-white firemen, policemen, postal workers and teachers, but the minority group's political impotence and social disunity prevented it from effectively pressuring local officials.

The creation of municipal civil rights bodies in other New Jersey communities, increasing racial tensions developing from transitional neighborhoods and growing Negro discontent prompted the city in 1950 to establish its own Civil Rights Commission. At the outset, the commission was given a vague mandate to investigate discrimination complaints. Mayor Carlyle Crane was sympathetic to the aims of the commission and selected its first members on the basis of interest. He appointed, among others, Warren Held, then principal of Plainfield High School, and Harry Bell, an official with the state civil rights division. These men were eager to forge the commission into a purposeful organ. For a short time the Civil Rights Commission faithfully traced complaints. They investigated the police department,

¹⁰Ibid., 72.

and local restaurants and barber shops. Succeeding Republican administrations endeavored to undo the Commission's uncalled for activism. When new appointments came up, so-called "hard-heads" received the administrations' invitations. "Soft-headed" liberals were bypassed. The Common Council closed the final loophole in 1957 by adopting an ordinance which circumscribed the Commission's powers and reduced it to a figurehead.¹¹ To the governing group, the old rule about racial friction still applied: Small problems needed only small answers.¹²

Throughout the 1950s the total membership of the NAACP hovered around 300. Tensions between various Negro socio-economic groups operated against unification under the NAACP. Some of the long-time Plainfielders in the organization were disturbed by the coarse manner and low educational level of the recent in-migrants. The established people were wary of efforts to escalate the NAACP from its club-like organization to that of a mass organization. There were many Negroes, on the other hand, who demonstrated little interest in civil rights activities. Among the Negro middle class, a good number adopted the attitude: "We made it the hard way; why can't everyone else do the same." A high proportion of the recently-arrived Southern Negroes were not ready for the

¹¹ Interview with Mills S. Barnes, Feb. 16, 1964.

¹² Interview with Harold N. Scherer, Jr., March 7, 1964.

ideological concepts of the activist Northern Negro. Most were so satisfied with the relative paradise of Plainfield and so pre-occupied with the problems of acclimatization to urban living, they neither had the time nor the inclination to listen.¹³

A 1953 controversy over minstrel shows spotlighted the dichotomy of outlook within the Negro community. The sensitive and militant were pitted against the individualist Negro. The activists in the NAACP had been urged by the national office to pressure for the discontinuance of local minstrel shows. The Plainfield branch and the church-oriented, interracial Plainfield Committee on Human Relations jointly objected to a minstrel show performance in Plainfield High School. Negroes were among those defending the shows. The NAACP was commonly scored for its over-sensitivity. A majority of the white community totally failed to comprehend the Negroes' motives for objection. In fact, some whites were indignant.

PLAINFIELD POLITICS: A NEW POINT OF VIEW

An important change in Plainfield politics occurred between 1948 and 1952. The conflict between the locally-employed Republicans and the shrinking commuter Plainfield Country Club group finally broke into the open. The insur-

¹³Barnes Interview

gents, because of their involvement with the city, took a deeper interest in the Negro and his relationship to Plainfield than had the R.C.A.C. elite. During the politically creative period of the insurgency, the Civil Rights Commission was organized and an ambitious housing redevelopment program was initiated.

Through World War II, the R.C.A.C. had maintained its hold on the crucial nominating procedure of the Republican Party. Its "guided democracy" allowed for some latitude. Ethnic representation from wards outside the Second gave lip-service to the emerging political reality. The political outlooks of these candidates were necessarily close to the R.C.A.C. consensus. The first major adjustment was the alliance with the Anthony J. Marino Association. For a decade the two groups were able to operate a very successful coalition.

Then new factors began to infringe on R.C.A.C. control. In 1945 the inner circle lost its most influential leader when Christie P. Hamilton died. Middle income housing construction in the post-war years drew more white homeowners to the city. These new whites, like many of those who preceded them, frequently dropped allegiances to urban Democratic parties as they became aware of the suburbanite's political concerns - property rights and tax rates.¹⁴ It

¹⁴New York Times, May 31, 1956.

was evident the Republican Party could look best after these interests. Furthermore if a new Plainfielder desirous of affiliation with a socially approved group, hoped to procure political favors or intended to launch himself on a political career, the GOP was the only place he could go. The Democratic Party lacked stature. Support for it would reduce one to the unhappy and insecure role of protest voter.¹⁵

The infusion of new residents, not entirely willing to digest the precepts of the elite and the commuters' loss of several promising leaders due to increased industrial job mobility, combined to assist the GOP rebellion of 1948. It all started when a local real estate and insurance dealer, Richard Bueschel, and a former commuter, Wallace C. Weglau, as members of the R.C.A.C. tried to recruit more locally-employed people for the inner councils. The move fell with disfavor upon the established people.

The rebuff convinced these men, their friends excluded by the R.C.A.C. country club elite, that the only way to gain an equitable voice in city politics was to contest the R.C.A.C. in open primaries. Opposition in the primaries would strike at the system by which the R.C.A.C. had traditionally picked Republican candidates. The insurgents admitted the R.C.A.C. had provided the city with government of integrity, but its non-representational character caused it to be

¹⁵NewYork Times, May 31, 1956.

unresponsive to the majority's problems.

In the April 1948 primary, Weglau edged the incumbent R.C.A.C.-backed councilmen for the GOP Second Ward nomination by a scant eight votes. In the Third Ward, Norman Abrams, a liberal insurgent, defeated the R.C.A.C.-endorsed candidate handily. The following year, Councilman John Tozzi publicly divorced himself from his R.C.A.C. endorsement and announced himself "an independent Republican from now on."¹⁶ The R.C.A.C.'s hold on the nominating procedure was weakening. An attempt by four anti-organization Republicans on the Common Council to ally with the Council's two Democrats to create a liberal majority failed only because one of the Democrats backed out.¹⁷

The insurgents' cause gained more momentum in the next few years. Warren Lynch headed a 1953 primary slate which tagged itself the "Clean and Unbossed." It captured three councilmanic nominations. Routed in the primaries, the inner circle had lost its source of unrivalled power. As a result, a more inclusive city-wide party was to take form throughout the 1950s. The new rough-and-tumble of primary politics and door-to-door campaigning tended to discourage from active politics some of the more capable commuter Republicans. Also that group's financial contribution to the party dropped.¹⁸

¹⁶ Plainfield Courier-News, December 8, 1949.

¹⁷ Interview with Norman S. Abrams, February 1, 1964.

¹⁸ Interview with Irving Velinsky, November 15, 1963.

These busy executives had neither the time nor the inclination to engage in political combat.

REPUBLICAN LIBERALISM AND THE NEGRO

The creative outlook of the insurgent Republicans developed new policies of concern to the city's Negroes. Influenced by liberal white concern over slum conditions in the Negro neighborhoods, these new councilmen moved to open an investigation of housing needs in Plainfield. The councilmanic committee, which was established for the purpose, studied city housing conditions and stirred an unexpectedly large response on the issue of public housing. The upshot of the study was the formation of the Plainfield Housing Authority in 1950. The Authority, an autonomous body, was set up so that it had to submit its redevelopment plans to the Common Council and Planning Board for approval. The immediate goal of the Authority was to clear slums and construct public housing in their place.

After strenuous public debate, the Authority was granted permission to begin clearing the slum block bounded by West Third Street, Liberty Street, West Fourth Street and Plainfield Avenue. On the site, West End Gardens, a 128-unit low-rent, low-rise public housing project was to be constructed. Four years after the Housing Authority was born, its first project was opened for occupancy. The location of West End Gardens, within the core of the city's Negro

section in the Fourth Ward, assured its occupants would be virtually all Negro.

During this outpouring of public-mindedness, a Sub-standard Housing Committee was organized to assist the Housing Authority and inform the Common Council of inadequate housing conditions. This group, however, rarely met and was soon relegated to do-nothing status. The Housing Authority, on the other hand, has maintained an active program. Before the completion of West End Gardens, the Authority made another redevelopment survey. This one found two deteriorated areas of the city in need of total renewal. The first was adjacent to the West End Gardens and the second in the Cottage Place area. The Authority preferred the former site for a middle-income housing project. Housing was not suitable for the Cottage Place location. Further investigation led the Authority to propose a low-rent housing project on vacant land in the East End (First Ward) to counter-balance West End Gardens. In the next few years, three First Ward sites were offered to the Council and all three were rejected. Finally, the Housing Authority found the successful formula. It chose a deteriorated block north of the railroad off Elmwood Place and the Common Council approved the redevelopment plans. The NAACP had joined in efforts to request approval from the Council. In 1961, Elmwood Gardens, a 120-unit low-income

housing project, costing slightly more than \$2 million, was completed.

The disillusionment and distrust of Plainfielders for the Housing Authority and its aims deepened in the mid-1950s. The Authority's housing projects had become occupied almost entirely by Negroes, a situation assured by their locations in the heavily Negro Fourth Ward. As the rate of Negro influx into the city accelerated, many criticized the Housing Authority for "attracting" more low-income Negroes to the city.

CHAPTER THREE

THE SETTING

CHAPTER THREE

THE BLACK ISLAND

Most white Plainfielders are puzzled by the rapid increase in the city's non-white population over the last decade. "Why are Negroes so attracted to Plainfield?", they ask. Some half-jokingly argue that posters, placed in key spots in the South advertise Plainfield as a northern paradise for Negroes. Others point to the late Clifford Durant's reputation as an easy relief touch when he was Overseer of the Poor. They surmise the city gained a reputation for it and still attracts relief seekers from out of state. A 1959 Mayor's Welfare Review Committee found this impression not borne out by the facts. A third argument advanced is the low-income "black" housing projects have drawn Negroes to Plainfield either to fill apartments vacated by project residents or to establish residence in the city for project eligibility. The validity of these beliefs is at best dubious.

The 1960 census revealed both a 4,028 increase in Plainfield's non-white population and a net loss of 1,309 white residents during the preceding decade.¹ The stimuli of lowered discriminatory barriers in selected suburban housing markets, increased accumulation of funds by urban

¹U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1960 PC(1)32B, N.J., Table 20, p. 72, and 1950, PC, N.J., Table 3, p. 63.

Negro families and further overcrowding of non-white ghetto neighborhoods have produced a powerful demand on the part of Northern Negroes for new housing opportunities. Middle and lower-middle class Negroes, in their attempts to flee the disagreeable urban ghettos, have experienced serious difficulty in finding decent available housing in most outlying suburban communities. Negroes have flocked to Plainfield primarily because it is the only city between Newark and Trenton in which sizable "respectable" neighborhoods have been opened for them.² In essence, the Negroes' selection of Plainfield over any other surrounding municipality has been "a matter that is [more than likely] beyond the [individual's] immediate control."³ The comforting assurance of a long-established Negro settlement probably figured in the prospective Negro resident's decision, but Plainfield's biggest assets are its open neighborhoods. Some Plainfield Negroes commute each day to points as far as Elizabeth to reach work.

Plainfield boasts of several decent neighborhoods which might appeal to urban Negroes. The "Gilded Ghetto" in the East End ranks as one of suburban New Jersey's finest middle class Negro areas. Tract PL-0088 in the 1960 Census,

²Telephone Interview with Everett C. Lattimore, March 30, 1964; Interview with Rev. Frank W. Allen, February 2, 1964. (These will hereafter be cited as Lattimore Telephone Interview and Allen Interview.)

³Leo F. Schnore, "The Growth of Metropolitan Suburbs," The Suburban Community, ed. by William Dobiner (New York, 1958), 38.

bounded by Leland Avenue, East Seventh Street, Terrill Road and Green Brook, is a close approximation of this neighborhood. Approximately 40 per cent of the tract (1,786 persons) were Negro in 1960.⁴ The median value of a non-white owner-occupied home is \$15,900.⁵ A high percentage of Negroes (83 per cent) in the tract own rather than rent.⁶ The rate at which Negroes have moved into the neighborhood is startlingly high and has continued apace since the Census. Of the 473 non-white families which occupied dwelling units in the tract, only 171 had resided there before 1953. The largest influx of Negroes occurred in the "Gilded Ghetto" between 1954 and 1957 when 191 non-whites moved in. The in-pouring of Negroes continued between 1958 and early 1960 as some 111 non-white families entered the neighborhood.

Homes in which Negroes reside are of relatively recent construction by Plainfield standards. Of 518 units built during the 1950s in the formerly sparsely developed tract, 208 are occupied by non-whites today. Negroes, however, live in only 28 of the 223 units constructed between 1940 and 1949.⁷ The statistics corroborate active Negro home building in the tract since the middle 1950s. The

⁴U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1960, PHC(1) - 105, Newark S.M.S.A., Table P-1, p. 42.

⁵Ibid., Table H-1, p. 181.

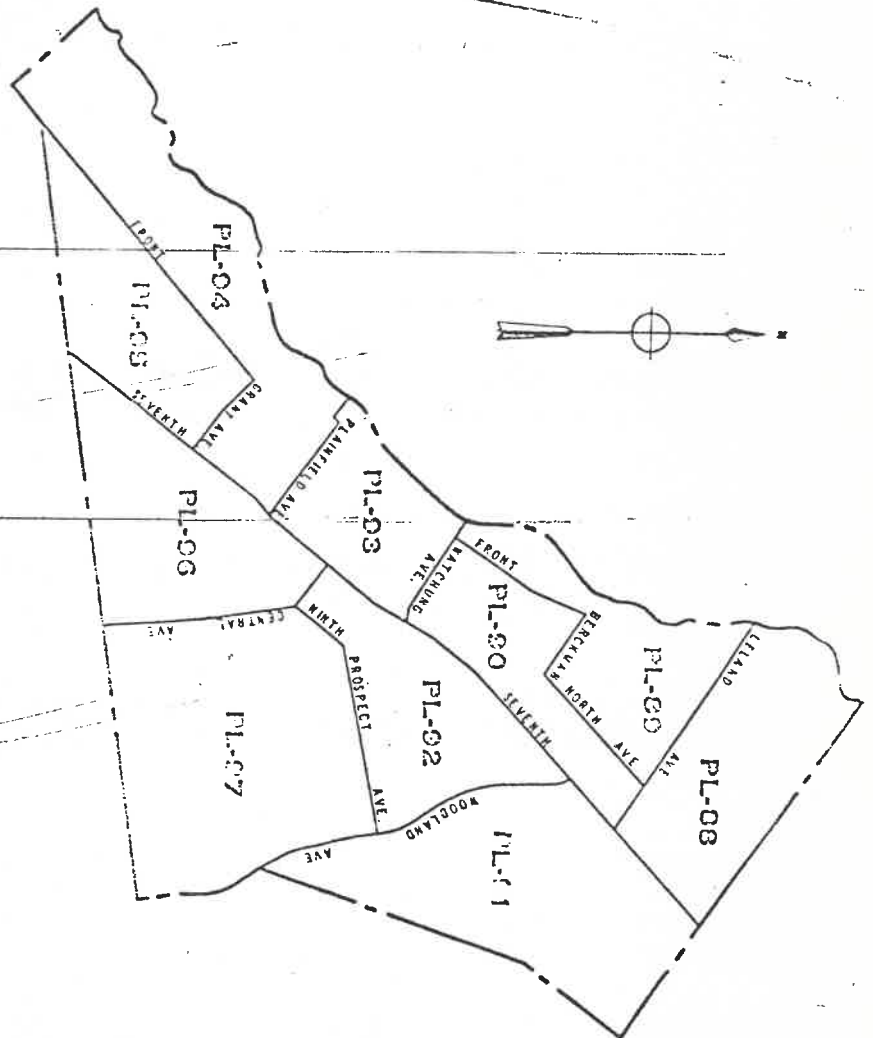
⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

This map divides Plainfield into its 10 census tracts. It may be found in Final Report PHC(1)-105 of the 1960 Census.

INSET C-PLAINFIELD CITY

SCALE
0 1000 2000 3000 FEET



physical condition of the Negro homes in the "Gilded Ghetto" is generally good.

The other major neighborhood into which Negroes have flocked recently is the Clinton School area in the far West End. Census Tract PL-0095, bounded by Grant Avenue, West Seventh Street, the Piscataway border and West Front Street, encompasses this segment of Plainfield which has seen a racial turnover in the past few years. Only about one-quarter of the tract's 444 Negro families resided in the same houses from 1953 to 1960. Between 1954 and 1957, 202 non-white families settled in their present homes on the tract and 130 more followed between 1958 and early 1960. According to the 1960 Census the tract's population was 35 per cent Negro.⁸ A "white exodus", accelerated by suspected block-busting and continued Negro influx has altered the neighborhood's racial composition still further.

Negroes in this tract divide almost evenly between owners and tenants. The quality of housing here is considerably below that in Tract 88. As of 1960, almost 95 per cent of the non-white occupied structures were built before 1940. Of the 444 non-white occupied units, 220 are deteriorated and 45 dilapidated. The median rental for the tract is \$93 per month, \$8 above the \$85 city median for non-whites.⁹

⁸Ibid., Table F-1, p. 42.

⁹Ibid., Table H-1, p. 181.

Relatively poorer and older housing is available to non-whites east of Grant Avenue between Front and Sixth Streets to the center of the city and then again on the east side of the business center. More than half of these units are rentals. The homes in this long discontinuous rectangle compose the core of the original Negro neighborhood and its early accretions.

With the exception of the middle income "Gilded Ghetto" in the East End, Negroes have been excluded from most of the city's good housing. Very few Negroes live south of Seventh Street, where the newest and soundest housing has been constructed. The 1960 Census counted 1642 deteriorating houses in Plainfield of which a disproportionate 619 were occupied by Negroes. A similar ratio existed in dilapidated structures, where Negroes occupied 187 of the city's 439.

Since 1960 several more neighborhoods have been pried open by Negroes. The most notable is Hillside Terrace between Putnam and Berckman Avenues, near the Woodland School. This break marks the first major incursion of non-whites south of the long-existent Seventh Street barrier. For years Negroes had lived in small isolated spots on Lake Street and Webster Place not far from Hillside Terrace but could not buy on adjacent blocks. The housing here is in good condition.

Although the Negro housing demand in Central Jersey is

very strong, realtors have been inclined to funnel the business into just a few selected places. Plainfield is one. Throughout much of Essex, Morris, Union, Somerset and Middlesex counties, most of the housing available to non-whites is located in rundown Negro sections of the various municipalities. Very often entire municipalities have been off-limits to Negroes. Outside the urban centers of Newark and Elizabeth virtually the only suburban cities in the area offering a variety in housing types and prices to Negroes and a modicum of "integrated" living are the Essex County communities of Montclair and East Orange, and Plainfield in Union County. In Union County municipalities like Linden, Union, Westfield and Scotch Plains the amount of housing available to Negroes is either qualitatively poor or quantitatively small. Some of the barriers in these communities have been cracked occasionally, but the gains made so far have been negligible.

The political jurisdictions immediately surrounding Plainfield in the tri-county area comprise a "white sea" around their "black island" of a central city. Presented below is a percentage breakdown of the non-white populations of communities either adjacent to or nearby Plainfield. The largest concentrations of non-whites are in Somerville and Westfield, two municipalities which serve as combined resi-

dential-commercial areas. In both municipalities, the total of Negroes in 1960 failed to exceed 1,500, only 15 per cent of Plainfield's non-white count. In many of the other communities, less than one per cent of the population is non-white. One Negro leader has described the situation: "Negroes couldn't get into some of these nearby residential towns with a crowbar."¹⁰

Non-White Percentage Breakdown in Communities
Surrounding Plainfield

City	Population 1960	% Non-White 1960	% Non-White 1950
Bound Brook	10,263	0.4	0.3
Dunellen	6,840	0.4	0.2
Edison	44,799	3.3	-- *
Garwood	5,426	0.1	-- *
Fanwood	7,963	0.7	0.4
Manville	10,995	0.1	6.5 ⁺
Metuchen	14,041	3.3	2.8
Middlesex	10,520	1.3	1.1
Mountainside	6,325	0.5	-- *
New Providence	10,243	0.3	0.4
North Plainfield	16,993	0.6	0.6
Raritan	6,137	0.1	-- *
Scotch Plains	18,491	5.5	-- *
Somerville	12,248	9.0	5.3
South Bound Brook	3,626	7.3	-- *
South Plainfield	17,879	2.3	3.4
Watchung	3,312	0.3	-- *
Westfield	31,447	4.6	5.7

- * - Unincorporated or not listed in 1950 table.
⁺ - Interracial veteran's housing unit closed in 1950s.

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1960 PC(1) 32-B, N.J. Table 12, p. 31-34, and 1950 PC, N.J., Table 10, p. 24-27.

¹⁰ Interview with Charles E. Miller, December 27, 1963.
 (This will hereafter be cited as Miller Interview.)

LOWERING BARRIERS

"There is no area in Plainfield that does not contain at least one Negro family. However, this does not imply [open] occupancy."¹¹ Neighborhoods still exist in Plainfield from which Negroes have been virtually excluded. The upper-income Sleepy Hollow area and the adjacent middle income Netherwood section remain very difficult for Negroes to break. The heart of the Third Ward Jewish neighborhood is still racially homogeneous, but inroads are being made on its outlying blocks. The streets to the west of the Clinton School in the far West End and the Hillside Terrace area have most recently been opened to Plainfield Negroes.

Several years ago a home was sold to a Negro on Bellevue Court in the all-white southernmost sector of the Second Ward. After frantic efforts to halt the sale by some white leaders had failed, neighboring whites sold out at higher prices to Negro families. An apparent job of blockbusting had been perpetrated. Soon the Court became entirely Negro and has remained the only block in the neighborhood on which Negroes live.¹²

Until this year Plainfield's garden apartments and high-rise apartment houses have not rented to Negroes. This exclusion creates a hardship for some Negroes living in poor

¹¹Letter from L. Cassell Wood, February 19, 1964.

¹²Miller Interview; Interview with Harold N. Scherer, March 7, 1964.

quality apartments and paying rents equivalent or nearly so to those paid in the garden apartments.¹³ Although there is a state law which prohibits discrimination in multiple dwellings, the Plainfield branch of the NAACP has been unable to induce any of the Negroes allegedly discriminated against to lodge a complaint.¹⁴

Without careful investigation, it is difficult to determine what means have been used by those involved in the finance and sale of housing units to discourage prospective Negro homeowners in Plainfield. A consensus indicates local lending institutions have accorded Negro home finance customers "fairer" treatment in the past three years - coinciding with the enactment of a state law forbidding lending institutions to discriminate in the conditions of their loans for real property and home repair. Negroes report they formerly could usually secure only mortgages with poor terms when they applied to local banks. This was especially marked when a Negro planned to crack an all-white neighborhood.

The actions of realtors in the Plainfield area have long been suspect by the Negro community. Most Negroes are convinced that realtors are willing only to handle the frequently profitable transactions in Negro neighborhoods, but will artfully dodge Negroes interested in buying into white

¹³Lattimore Telephone Interview.

¹⁴Allen Interview.

neighborhoods. Although the brokers can obviously obtain higher prices from these Negro customers, they have refrained from dealing with them. Some ascribe to the belief Negroes will lower values and thereby hurt future business. Others are more frank and admit they fear more Negroes in the city will drive the white population away.

The exclusion of the city's lone Negro realty firm, L.C. Wood & Co., from the realtor's multiple listing agreement, though "almost a nationwide practice", is indicative of the realtors' disapproval of Wood's efforts to integrate white neighborhoods.¹⁵

Blockbusting is a constant temptation in Plainfield, because the Negro influx has made white homeowners extremely jittery. No Plainfield realtor has ever been officially reprimanded for such tactics, but firms based outside the city have been cited for block-busting within Plainfield.

The influx of low-income groups, their high demand for housing and the city's aging stock of dwelling units have worked to make urban overcrowdedness a sore point in Plainfield too. There are a great many rambling, antiquated old mansions in the city which, in the last decade, have been engulfed by the Negro market. Many Negroes have been forced to pay over-the-market prices due

¹⁵Telephone Interview with L. Cassell Wood, March 16, 1964.

to their high demand. In order to make ends meet these new owners frequently divide the large structures into multi-apartment dwellings to accommodate additional tenants or fringe members of extended families.

Until very recently no crackdown has been made on these zoning ordinance violations. Negro leaders tend to blame the failure of the city government to investigate older cases of over-occupancy on West Third and West Fourth Streets on "political reasons". Local administrations have not been anxious to uncover violations in dwellings leased by local campaign contributors, the Negroes assert.¹⁶ Adequate manpower had never been provided the office of Building Inspector - Public Officer to enforce the regulations stringently. The moribund state of the Substandard Housing Committee was also testimony to white disinterest.

THE NATURE OF THE NEGRO COMMUNITY

The economic status as revealed in the 1960 Census of Plainfield's nearly 10,000 colored residents approximates the general situation of all Newark area Negroes and betters that of Negroes in the entire New York metropolitan region.¹⁷ The median family income for Plainfield non-whites,

¹⁶Interview with Everett C. Lattimore, October 8, 1963.

¹⁷U.S. Bureau of the Census 1960 PC(1) 320, N.J., Table 78, p. 269 and 273, and 1960 PHC(1)-105, Newark S.M.S.A., Table P-4, p. 140. These figures show almost 39 per cent of Negro families in Plainfield receive more than \$6,000 in earnings and more than 20 per cent earn over \$8,000. Comparable statistics for the New York Metropolitan Area are 30.4 and 14.6 per cent respectively. See Table I, p. 52-A for comparable Newark S.M.S.A. statistics. (These works will be cited hereafter as 1960 PC(1)-320 and 1960 PHC(1)-105.)

\$5,088, exceeds the New York area totals by 11.9 per cent. Negroes in the Newark Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area, of which Plainfield is a part, earn 6 per cent less than "Queen City" Negroes do.

The statistics, on more careful inspection, show Newark area Negroes, including Plainfielders, earning higher incomes on lower status jobs. They also indicate Plainfield's Negro community is wealthier and more educationally advanced than Negroes in the nearby urban centers of Elizabeth, Newark and New Brunswick, but falls short of the upper strata Negro communities of East Orange and Montclair (see Table I, p. 52-A).

When compared to Plainfield whites, the city's Negroes are badly outdistanced. The whites' median family income is approximately \$3,000 higher than the Negroes' and his educational achievement exceeds the Negroes' by more than three years.¹⁸ Of employed male whites 37 per cent are professionals, managers, technicians or officials while only 6 per cent of Negro males hold these jobs. Sixty-five per cent of the male Negro work force are employed as operatives, service workers and laborers. Only 22 per cent of employed male whites hold jobs in these classifications.¹⁹ Since 1947 the occupational distribution of the growing Plainfield Negro community has remained quite static.²⁰

¹⁸ 1960 PC(1)-32C, Table 76, p. 257 and Table 78, p. 273.

¹⁹ 1960 PC(1)-32C, Table 74, p. 229 and Table 78, p. 273.

²⁰ American Jewish Congress, Northtown Survey on Human Relations (Plfd., 1947), 10 and 1960 PC(1)-32C, Table 78, 273.

TABLE I

COMPARISON OF MEDIAN INCOME AND EDUCATIONAL
LEVELS IN SIGNIFICANT STATISTICAL AREAS

<u>STATISTICAL AREA</u>	<u>NON-WHITE POPULATION</u>	<u>MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME</u>	<u>MEDIAN EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT</u>
Newark S.M.S.A.	227,172	\$4,807	9.0
Newark	139,331	\$4,491	8.8
0041	2,731	\$7,267	10.8
0051	1,634	\$6,955	10.8
East Orange	19,420	\$5,907	10.1
EO-0108	1,746	\$6,125	12.0
EO-0112	1,376	\$6,395	11.3
EO-0117	1,257	\$6,500	11.8
Montclair	10,385	\$5,601	10.3
MO-0170	1,217	\$6,091	12.1
MO-0172	1,257	\$6,888	12.1
PLAINFIELD	9,500	\$5,088	9.0
PL-0088	1,786	\$6,726	10.9
PL-0093/4* (approx.)	3,671	\$4,150	8.6
PL-0095	2,039	\$5,914	9.2
New Brunswick	6,329	\$4,609	8.7
Elizabeth	11,000	\$4,585	6.7

*Tract PL-0093 and PL-0094 are combined in order to represent the lower income district of Plainfield. Unfortunately, a portion of the latter tract would be ideally placed in PL-0095.

SOURCE: Compiled from U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1960
PHC(1) - 105, Newark SMSA, Table P-4, p. 140-150,
and 1960 PHC(1) - 91, Middlesex County, Table
P-4, p. 44.

TABLE II

NON-WHITE MALE OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION

CLASSIFICATION ONE*		CLASSIFICATION TWO*		CLASSIFICATION THREE*	
STATISTICAL AREA	PCT.	STATISTICAL AREA	PCT.	STATISTICAL AREA	PCT.
New York-Northeastern New Jersey Std. Consolidated Area	8.4	New York-Northeastern New Jersey Std. Consolidated Area	25.4	New York-Northeastern New Jersey Std. Consolidated Area	54.5
Newark SMSA	5.8	Newark SMSA	19.3	Newark SMSA	59.2
Newark	3.1	Newark	17.9	Newark	61.3
Montclair	13.2	Montclair	23.0	Montclair	55.0
MO-0170	20.4	MO-0170	31.1	MO-0170	40.7
MO-0172	21.2	MO-0172	32.3	MO-0172	42.1
East Orange	10.7	East Orange	28.3	East Orange	58.6
EO-0108	8.8	EO-0108	29.9	EO-0108	56.5
EO-0112	14.5	EO-0112	23.8	EO-0112	50.4
EO-0117	16.1	EO-0117	35.7	EO-0117	41.4
PLAINFIELD	5.9	PLAINFIELD	17.4	PLAINFIELD	64.3
PL-0088	10.5	PL-0088	29.0	PL-0088	54.0
PL-0095	3.4	PL-0095	9.8	PL-0095	78.5
PL-0093/4	3.4	PL-0093/4	14.8	PL-0093/4	61.5
New Brunswick	6.0	New Brunswick	14.0	New Brunswick	69.9
Elizabeth	3.4	Elizabeth	15.0	Elizabeth	78.8

*Classification One: Professional, technical and kindred workers; managers, officials and proprietors, including farm.

*Classification Two: Clerical and kindred workers; sales workers; craftsmen, foremen and kindred workers.

*Classification Three: Operatives and kindred workers; private household workers; service workers, excluding private household; laborers, except mine.

SOURCE: Compiled from U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1960 PHC(1)-105, Newark S.M.S.A., Table P-4, p. 140-150, and 1960 PHC(1)-91, Middlesex County, Table P-4, p. 44.

TABLE III

INCOME EXTREMES

<u>STATISTICAL AREA</u>	<u>Number Non-White Families</u>	<u>Pct. Earning Below \$3,000</u>	<u>Pct. Earning Above \$8,000</u>
New York-Northeastern New Jersey Std. Con- solidated Area	366,607	26.1	14.7
Newark S.M.S.A.	51,587	23.8	16.6
Newark	31,904	27.4	13.2
East Orange	4,573	13.0	28.0
Montclair	2,603	15.8	24.6
PLAINFIELD	2,212	19.2	20.9
PL-0088	436	4.8	38.7
PL-0095	426	12.6	25.7
PL-0093/4	827	28.0*	13.0*
New Brunswick	1,293	28.6	15.8
Elizabeth	2,651	26.8	13.1

*An approximate average of PL-0093 and PL-0094

SOURCE: Compiled from U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1960
PC(1)-32B, N.J. Table 78, page 273, 1960 PHC(1)-
105, Newark S.M.S.A., Table P-4, P.140-150, and
1960 PHC(1)-91, Middlesex County, Table P-4, P44.

A breakdown of Plainfield Negroes points out the community can be broken down into three economic levels, mainly determined by income. The strata are the combined upper-middle and middle classes, the lower-middle and finally the lower class. There is little residential grouping by occupation.

The Negro neighborhoods have not refined themselves along occupational lines, because the lack of available housing outside the First and Fourth Wards of Plainfield has kept some of the professionals and technically trained persons from buying into more well-to-do neighborhoods. It is common for a well-paid laboratory technician to live next door to a moderately paid machinist or truck driver. The more established Negro communities in East Orange and Montclair seem to have developed more occupationally sophisticated neighborhoods (See Table II, p. 52-C). The closest Plainfield comes to this type of sophistication, is in the East End "Gilded Ghetto". This neighborhood, Census Tract PL-88, ranks as one of New Jersey's most attractive middle class integrated neighborhoods. The median family income of this area's Negroes compares favorably not only to the neighboring whites, but to any comparable census tract in Montclair and East Orange. Yet the proportion of high status occupation Negroes is considerably lower in Tract PL-88.²¹

²¹1960 PHC(1)-105, Table P-4, 150.

The next strata below this Negro middle class is the generally lower-middle class neighborhood of Negroes which has developed in the Clinton School area. This is composed of 1960 Census Tract PL-95 plus a few blocks to the east around the Washington School. The per family income in this neighborhood is equivalent to the median income of all East Orange Negroes but several hundred dollars higher than Montclair's median. The educational level is somewhat lower than the median in both of the other cities. Living within this tract of homes a good deal older than those in PL-88, were more than 100 Negro families, comprising between 25 and 30 per cent of the tract's non-white population, which received annual incomes of more than \$8,000.²² These are the families who suffer most from the segregated housing patterns.

The lowest strata of Plainfield Negroes, accounting for approximately one-half of the non-white population, are most heavily concentrated in 1960 Census Tract PL-93 (the oldest Negro neighborhood) and the Negro sector of Tract PL-94, especially the area abutting on Plainfield Avenue. The Negroes here earn only about \$4,100 per year, a lower mean family income than the Newark or Elizabeth medians but higher than these cities' poorest non-white neighborhoods.²³ The Plainfield community stands between the extremes of

²²Ibid.

²³Ibid.

Negro wealth and poverty. (See Table III, p. 52-C)

In occupational status, Plainfield again stands close to the Newark Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area percentages, but below those of the New York Metropolitan area. The percentages of non-white professional, managerial and technical workers in East Orange and Montclair are approximately double Plainfield's and between 20 and 50 per cent higher than the New York Metropolitan area totals. Plainfield and the Newark S.M.S.A. remain close. (See Table II, p. 52-B)

In the middle occupational classifications, consisting of clerical and sales workers and skilled craftsmen, Plainfield ranks far below East Orange, Montclair and the New York area average. Once more the Newark S.M.S.A. and Plainfield's percentages are similar. The relatively low educational level for non-whites in both statistical areas (see Table I, p. 52-A) help account for the difference. It may be noted too that Plainfield retail stores were cited most often by Negroes in 1947 for their discriminatory hiring practices. The statistics indicate this situation had not been substantially rectified as of 1960.

Stratification in Detail

To obtain a better perspective of the three main neighborhood types of the Plainfield Negro community, we will compare them with our show-case cities, East Orange and Montclair and urban yardsticks, Elizabeth, the Newark metropolitan

(encompassing all the above) and New York Metropolitan Statistical areas.

Tract PL-88, comprising most of the "Gilded Ghetto", accounts for approximately 20 per cent of Plainfield's total Negro population. The median family income for Negroes in the tract is \$6,732. This compares favorably to the median family income of all Plainfield whites living north of Seventh Street.

For a time Tract 88 itself represented a degree of occupational stratification, because initially professionals and technicians were the first Negroes attracted there.²⁴ In recent years the increasing availability of housing for non-whites in the tract has permitted its occupational base to widen so that it now includes a great number of lower classification workers who earn sufficient incomes to buy a house there.

The median family income of the Negroes in Tract PL-88 is higher than any Negro statistical tract in East Orange and \$156 less than the wealthiest non-white tract in Montclair (MO-0172). Only two tracts in all of Newark have higher non-white median family incomes (0041 and 0051). The relatively low educational level (10.9 median school years) in the "Gilded Ghetto" as contrasted to those in other high income level tracts indicates the most accomplished Negroes have

²⁴Interview with Everett Lattimore, Oct. 15, 1963.

settled most heavily in East Orange and Montclair. Since World War II, these communities have been considered "the places to move".²⁵

Plainfield has yet to attain that reputation but if more of the city's housing supply is opened for the colored market it will do so. The three East Orange tracts above \$6,000 have educational levels of 11.8, 11.3 and 12.0 median school years completed. Montclair's two tracts above \$6,000 in median family income both have educational levels at 12.1 school years.

Extremes of wealth are uncommon in the tract. A low 4.8 per cent of the non-white families earn less than \$3,000 per year. A significantly high proportion of Negro families (38.7 per cent) earn more than \$10,000. Because Plainfield is not quite established as a "place to move" for Negroes, income remains by far the most important determinant of homeownership in its most well-to-do neighborhood. Therefore, the status indice for the "Gilded Ghetto" - occupational distribution and median educational achievement - are less imposing than those in the best East Orange and Montclair neighborhoods. In occupational classification one,²⁶ Tract 88 actually stands lower than the proportional distribution in all of both Montclair and East Orange but almost

²⁵Lattimore Telephone Interview.

²⁶U.S. Bureau of the Census. I have classified the first two standard occupational categories as Classification One. They are as follows: professional, technical and kindred workers; managers, officials and proprietors.

doubles that of the Plainfield Negro community as a whole. Four of the five wealthiest tracts in Montclair and East Orange exceed Tract 88 by 40 to 90 per cent in this occupational classification. In classification two²⁷ Tract 88 barely exceeds all of East Orange in proportional distribution, but is 70 per cent greater than the paltry figures for all of Plainfield non-whites. In the lowest occupational classification²⁸ Tract 88 contains, in proportional terms, about 10 per cent more than the best neighborhoods in Montclair and East Orange and about 10 per cent less than the Plainfield Negro community as a whole. The statistics for Tract 95 prove it is a better-than-average Negro neighborhood whose non-white residents primarily earn lower-middle class incomes. The housing here is generally old. More than 50 per cent of the units occupied by non-whites are either deteriorated or dilapidated.²⁹ The occupational status of the non-white population is markedly low, the educational achievement is average for the city, yet the income level is comparatively high for a Negro community, and nearly \$1,000 more than the City of Plainfield median.

²⁷U.S. Bureau of the Census. Classification Two: clerical and kindred workers; sales workers; craftsmen, foremen and kindred workers.

²⁸U.S. Bureau of the Census. Classification Three: operatives and kindred workers; private household workers; service workers and laborers.

²⁹1960 PHC - 105, Table H-1, 181.

The lower-class tracts (whose statistics are somewhat distorted by a lower-middle class in the eastern part [Grant Avenue] of Tract #94) extends along the West Third-West Fourth Street axis at the focal point of the Negro community. Here homes are mainly rented and very few units, with the exception of the two public housing projects, have been built since 1940. The predominant number of dwelling units occupied by Negroes are deteriorated or dilapidated.³⁰ A relatively high percentage of the population (approximately 28 per cent) earns less than \$3,000 a year. Very few (approximately 3 per cent) of the residents hold jobs in occupational class one. The median number of school years completed is below the metropolitan area median for non-whites. This is the Plainfield neighborhood in which the non-white crime rate is concentrated and most of the city's non-white relief cases reside.

The growth of Plainfield's non-white population since the 1960 census has added significantly to each of the aforementioned socio-economic groups. Because no figures are available, it is impossible to estimate which group has gained most from the influx and in what way the resident population has changed in the past five years.

THE EPHEMERAL COUP DE GRACE

The Plainfield Republican Party was nearly upset in the early 1950s by Harry Herzog, a dynamic Democratic mayor-

³⁰Ibid.

alty candidate. Some of Herzog's largest incursions into the GOP vote occurred in the traditionally Republican Negro districts. To counter this new appeal of the Democrats among Negroes and to shore up its stronghold on the Common Council, the Republicans made an obvious overture for the Negro vote. This bid for recognition cemented Negro ties with the local Republican Party for awhile but vaulted no Negroes into policy-making positions within the party.

Now that the near-complete domination of the commuter (Plainfield Country Club) element had been upset by the "Clean and Unbossed", more groups demanded and earned a place in the inner workings of the party. The Italians of the First and Fourth Wards continued to receive their prestigious patronage plums and fill a Councilmanic post or two. The Jews maintained a GOP councilmen in the Third Ward and a backlog of former councilmen who maintained their influence. The native stock local people who had spearheaded the primary fights came to wield a larger power in party affairs. The commuter element did not leave the picture entirely. They still provided competent men to serve on municipal committees and boards. In these positions their influence was weighty.

The Fourth Ward for many years had remained the seat of the Negro community in Plainfield. As we have seen in 1932, there were four Republican Negro clubs in the city and

only one Democratic one. The GOP attracted a few of the politically-motivated Negroes to work for them. Mrs. Esther M. Dillard and McKinley Glenn for many years served as district leaders in the Fourth Ward. Their job was to see that the rather negligible Negro vote stayed in the Republican column. This ward with its traditionally low voter registration was not a vital one in city politics because it tended to have little effect on the vital mayoralty and three Councilman-at-Large posts. In fact as more Negroes moved to the ward, its percentage of the total city votes dropped from 21 per cent in 1946 to 14 per cent in 1962.

The GOP sensed the opportunity in 1955 to solidify its hold on the local Negro vote. The Democratic Party led by Herzog had exhibited a definite appeal to the Negro voter. While race relations remained relatively quiet, the stage seemed set for a Republican coup de grace. That year the GOP nominated the first Negro, Dr. James Reid, to the Common Council. Dr. Reid, a dentist, was a cinch winner for a Councilman-at-large seat. The safe plurality the GOP had held in city-wide elections assured easy sailing for him. Had Dr. Reid run on his own in a ward race his election would have been more significant. He ran for re-election to his at-large post in 1957. Several months later financial pressures forced him to resign. Militant Negroes were disappoint-

ed by his failure to press before the Council the ministers' complaints about discrimination in the police and fire departments and the schools.

L. Cassell Wood, local Negro realtor and First Ward Republican, was appointed to fill Reid's seat in February 1958. After winning a one year term to the at-large seat that November, Wood tried for renomination in the primary of 1959. He was defeated and then beaten again in 1960 when he tried for the GOP nomination for First Ward Councilman. Wood polled a sizable vote in losing the nomination to Richard H. Snyder, a white.

There are still a good many Negroes active in the Plainfield Republican Party, especially among the Negro middle-class in the First Ward. In regard to the lower-income Negro, the GOP has seemingly lost the initiative to the long-moribund Democrats in courting this vote. As racial problems have become more intense in recent times, the local Republican Party has leaned more heavily on white candidates than it had during the late 1950s. The place of the Negro in the Plainfield Republican Party has always been obscure. To this day it remains so.

THE CONTRIBUTION BEGINS

It is well known that Plainfield has always been a "naturally" Republican city. Factors other than its suburban

location have inhibited the growth of the opposition party. The absence of large-scale heavy industry has precluded the growth of an effective Democrat-aligned organized labor movement.

The largest industrial union in the city was United Auto Workers local at the Mack Truck plant, but that one became involved in a messy labor relations situation and eventually "wage-pushed" itself out of existence when Mack Truck moved to Hagerstown, Maryland in 1961. The other active unions in Plainfield are the ILGWU, which has organized five small garment manufacturing firms, the Machinists and the assorted craft unions. The large percentage of the workers employed in Plainfield are in unorganized sales and clerical jobs.

The existent labor unions, as a rule, have played little part in Plainfield politics. Today not even a framework for labor political activity is available. The Plainfield Central Labor Union, a potential political instrument on the local scene, was dissolved in 1961 when the New Jersey AFL and CIO merged. The new units were set up by counties. The headquarters of the Union County AFL-CIO organization is located in Elizabeth. Plainfield politics is far removed from the county unit's view.

In addition, the Negro plays a very small part in union activities in Plainfield. Most of the garment manu-

facturers do not hire Negroes because of employee objections. The craft unions which dominate the organized labor picture in the city, have few Negro members and are more politically conservative than most industrial unions.

The poor image of the state Democratic Party had always inhibited suburban support for it. In the 1930s the time seemed ripe for the party to make headway in cities like Plainfield, but the suburbanites' automatic association of Democratic politics with big city political machines was unavoidable. Boss-rule like the Hague regime in Hudson County typified the political machinations many suburbanites had been anxious to flee. A few, especially some of the less-affluent Catholics, clung to their urban allegiances.

In 1946 George Feaster gave up the city chairmanship after 15 years in the position. The Democratic Party was at a very low ebb. Its mayoralty candidate corralled only 24 per cent of the vote and did not threaten his GOP opponent in any of the four wards. In the ensuing post-war years, the composition of the city's population was changing and prospects for an improvement in the Democrats' chances brightened. The party was able to regain a steady plurality in the Fourth Ward and cut deeply into the Republican lead in the First. In both wards the formerly powerful Italian families were losing their political leverage, as Italians moved out and Negroes moved in. The Democrats were still

attracting few talented people and their candidates were of second-rate caliber.

Although impeded by lackluster candidates, the Democratic Party showed "greater strength than they have in years" in 1957 when Governor Robert Meyner carried the city and Robert A. MacConnell won the second Democratic seat in the Fourth Ward.³¹

The gradual accretion noted in the party's vote-getting power in Plainfield was assisted by its renewed vigor at the state level. Yet the Negro, the Plainfield Democrats' most potent source of support, had not been tapped by the party. No Negroes held party posts or were selected as candidates. The Negro had not run out of patience with the Republicans. The Democrat leaders, meanwhile, seemed to be weighing the burden of representing the Negro and all his complaints against white Plainfield with the lure of political gain, surely to be derived by capturing the Negro vote.

The turning point occurred between 1959 and 1961. During this period, the Negro was able to begin his first substantive contribution to the political life of Plainfield. He gained a voice, increasingly loud and clear, in the Democratic Party. In 1959 a Fourth Ward Negro, Eugene Campbell, lost in his bid for Councilman-at-Large but outpolled his

³¹ Plainfield Courier-News, November 6, 1957.

fellow Democratic running-mates. The following year produced more impressive results. Donald Van Blake, an active member of the Plainfield NAACP, was elected treasurer of the city committee. He has held the post ever since. Campbell defeated an Italian opponent in the Democratic primary and then went on to win a Fourth Ward Council seat that fall. The party rang up its highest vote ever in that 1960 Presidential year and captured a First Ward seat too.

Capitalizing on the Republicans' mishandling of a racially-tinged land controversy in the First Ward, Negro Everett Lettimore, running as a Democrat, scored a solid victory in the First Ward the following year. That gave the party four votes on the Council but far more important for the Negroes, Lettimore's victory had finally vaulted someone into the governing body who would speak forthrightly on the Negro's concerns.

THE ECONOMIC SETTING

The Negro influx has intensified the already existent economic problems of Plainfield. Several years ago a consultant advised a large department store not to locate in Plainfield because the city was going downhill.³² Many different factors have operated to create this opinion, but the Negro Awakening, which we will investigate in the following chapter, has made remedial action more urgent. The racial tensions and declining income levels have engendered an uneasiness about the city's present status and future. The way in which the city comes to grips with its concurrent racial and economic problems will determine "What Kind of A City" Plainfield will be.³³

Plainfield is losing its function as a high value residential suburb, because the commuting population has shifted its work-site to midtown Manhattan. This location is inconvenient from the Plainfield rail routes. Connecticut, thus, has inherited this bedroom role. Plainfield's per capita income statistics are still about \$2,500 above the Union County average, but this is primarily a survival of a past situation that is losing its anchorage in Plainfield. The people with the higher incomes are leaving the city in an exodus caused by industrial mobility and anxiety over the

³²Maurice E.H. Rotival, The Plainfield Area: A Survey for the Plainfield Trust State National Bank (Plainfield, 1963) 47. (This work will hereafter be cited as The Plainfield Area).

³³Plainfield Courier-News, editorial, Nov. 14, 1963.

growth of the Negro population. The families which remain in the Central Jersey area are moving to Westfield, Scotch Plains, Warren Township and Green Brook, all coincidentally with small or negligible Negro populations. These communities have become heir to the area's high value residential function. Meanwhile, "Plainfield is moving toward high density with middle and low income levels."³⁴

Other circumstances have fostered a pessimistic outlook for the city's economic future. The removal of the Mack Truck Corp. and its large weekly payroll from the city was a harmful blow. The company's re-location in Hagerstown, Maryland was prompted by a bad labor situation with the UAW Local and company dissatisfaction with an outmoded plant.

The cause is lost for increased industrial expansion. The lack of available land has necessitated Plainfield to surrender to neighboring communities like Piscataway the hope of luring large industrial retables. Retaining the major retables -- Wood Machinery, National Starch & Chemical Co., and several others -- is the city's prime task now.

Another adverse condition, often asserted by the Republicans' political opposition, is that Plainfield has not adequately taken care of itself. It has failed to acquire additional park lands, widened only two streets in

³⁴The Plainfield Area, 6.

the last 20 years, made no attempt to improve the flow of outside traffic through the city, and has, as yet, not torn up the old trolley tracks in the business district.

"Plainfield is being bypassed on all sides [by highways]. The city is in an isolated triangle." So proclaimed a Courier-News editorial in late 1963.³⁵ In an era when railroad industrial transport has become costly for short hauls and Plainfield's Jersey Central, once the city's economic anchor, now a sick old man, the importance of access to state and federal highways, whose construction is suitable for heavy truck use is heightened.³⁶ The business district needs good feeder roads, so that shoppers in outlying communities will be able to approach the district quickly and directly.

The bypassing of the city by all the major highway improvements in the post-war years has made Plainfield a difficult place to reach by auto. The only state highway through the city is Route 28, which is a commercial road dotted with numerous stoplights and subject to frequent congestion. U.S. Route 22, an outmoded highway, which passes between Newark and Phillipsburg in the state, lies to the north of the city, but connections through North Plainfield

³⁵Plainfield Courier-News, editorial, Nov. 11, 1963.

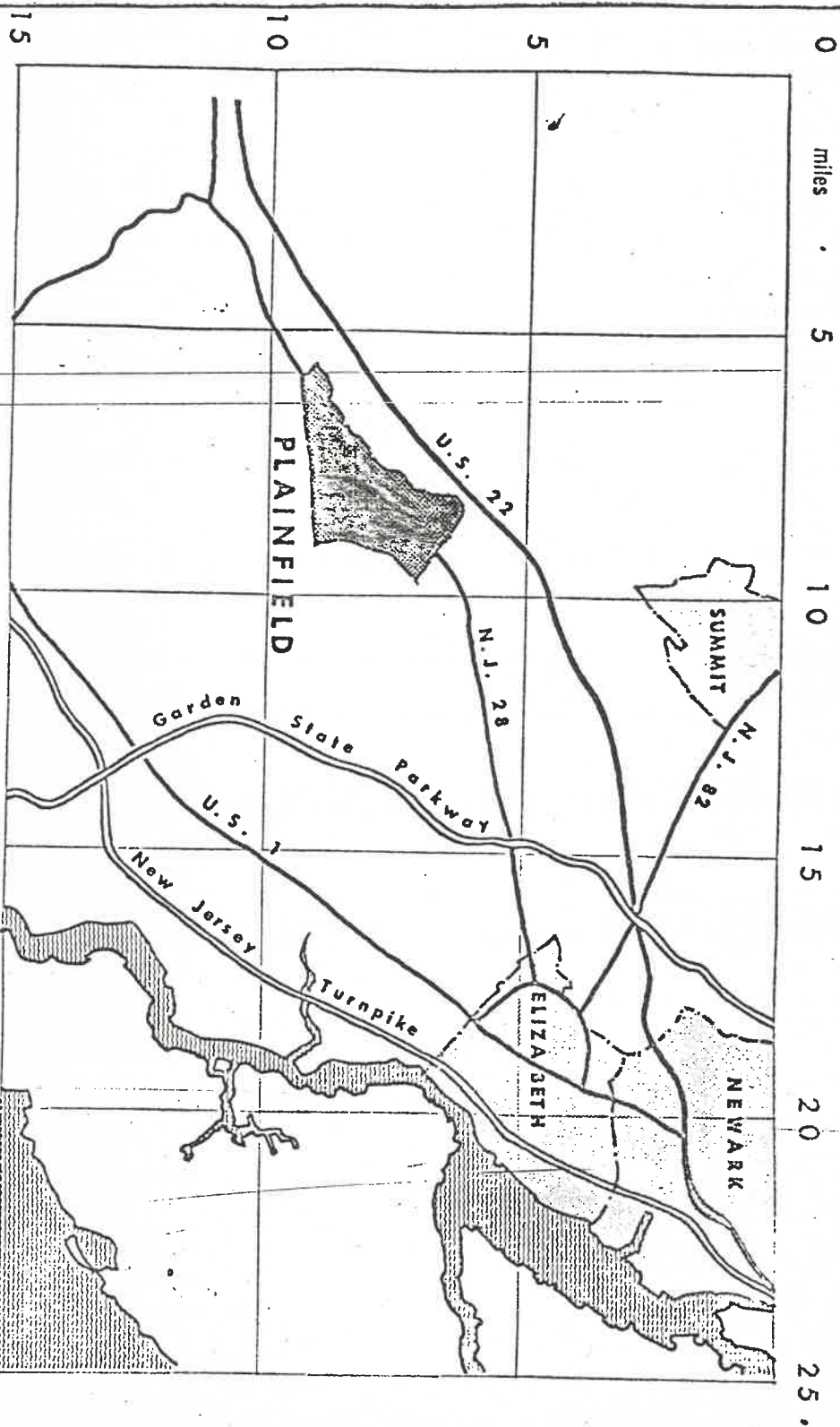
³⁶Charles E. Stonier, "Problems of Suburban Transport Services, The Suburban Community, ed. by William Dobriner, 333.

are not good. The circumferential Interstate Route 287 which passes to the south and west of Plainfield by several miles is very difficult to reach from the heart of the city. Access to New Brunswick the urban center to the south is likewise poor. As the Rutgers University complex enlarges, better roads toward New Brunswick through Piscataway will become a necessity.

The highway isolation problem is an urgent one for the city. The resolution of it will be a large determinant in shaping whether Plainfield will retain its role as a central business district and expand itself into a cultural center, as many hope it will.

Another detrimental development to Plainfield's economy has been the growth of shopping centers and discount houses outside the city limits. This is of especial importance, because Plainfield's business district has emerged as the city's economic bulwark. While the area's population has been rising, the business district managed to maintain its annual sales volume. Incursions have been made by the new Route 22 discount stores in North Plainfield and Watchung. "The supermarket, shopping center and the discount house have created a revolution in retailing design and techniques and have put many small retailers out of business or forced them to adopt new merchandising methods."³⁷

³⁷William Leonard, "Economic Aspects of Suburbanization, Ibid., p. 190.



This road map of the east central New Jersey area demonstrates how Plainfield has been bypassed by the major new highways. No limited access highway is within easy reach of the city.

A 1961 poll of 3,787 interviews conducted by the Plainfield Area Chamber of Commerce found that a solid 67 per cent or so of Plainfield area people make their primary consumption expenditures (wearing apparel, home furnishings, appliances, housewares and drugs) in downtown Plainfield. In only wearing apparel did the highway outlets garner nearly 20 per cent of the total. People who shopped on the highway cited parking advantages, lower prices and more convenient night shopping as their reasons.³⁸

Improvement in the downtown area such as store modernization, off-street parking and general beautification might be good, a leading planning official recently told the Chamber of Commerce, but they are "only half measures". The businessmen were told their downtown area is not "fulfilling the needs of a central business district." Its buildings were scored as old, its streets too narrow and its access routes inadequate. Renewal, the speaker concluded, is the only long-term solution.³⁹

One element of the Negro influx and its relation to property values not commonly appreciated is that the non-whites have moved into a stock of dwellings which were old and had been deteriorating for some time. The predominance of pre-1930 dwellings, residential and commercial, north of

³⁸ Plainfield Area Chamber of Commerce, 1961 Public Opinion Survey of the Plainfields (Plainfield, 1961).

³⁹ Speech by Robert N. Barratt as printed in Plainfield Courier-News, January 6, 1964.

Seventh Street has led to frequent blight. The Housing Authority is available to articulate and execute programs of renewal or rehabilitation in both the housing and commercial sectors, but "in Plainfield the Housing Authority is a dirty word." Moreover, among Plainfielders "there is almost an irresistible tendency ... extremely dangerous ... to try to bury these problems."⁴⁰ Many people had assumed blight in the Negro neighborhood was the Negro's problem, not one for the whole community. The Negro Awakening has begun to shape a wider view of the community.

Some have predicted the increase in the city's low-income Negro population will mean municipal costs for relief and schools will rise and financial adversity will set in.⁴¹ One white leader interviewed, bluntly stated Plainfield could not afford anymore low-income Negroes.⁴² He cited evidence demonstrating the city's Negroes account for most of the crime and welfare payments yet contribute less, per capita, in taxes.

Partially due to this economic squeeze, some city leaders have begun to work vigorously to stabilize the city's ratebales. They have embarked on efforts to obtain new commercial ratebles and to assist in improving conditions for those currently in the city. A second plan to secure white middle class residential stability by the

⁴⁰The Plainfield Area, 8.

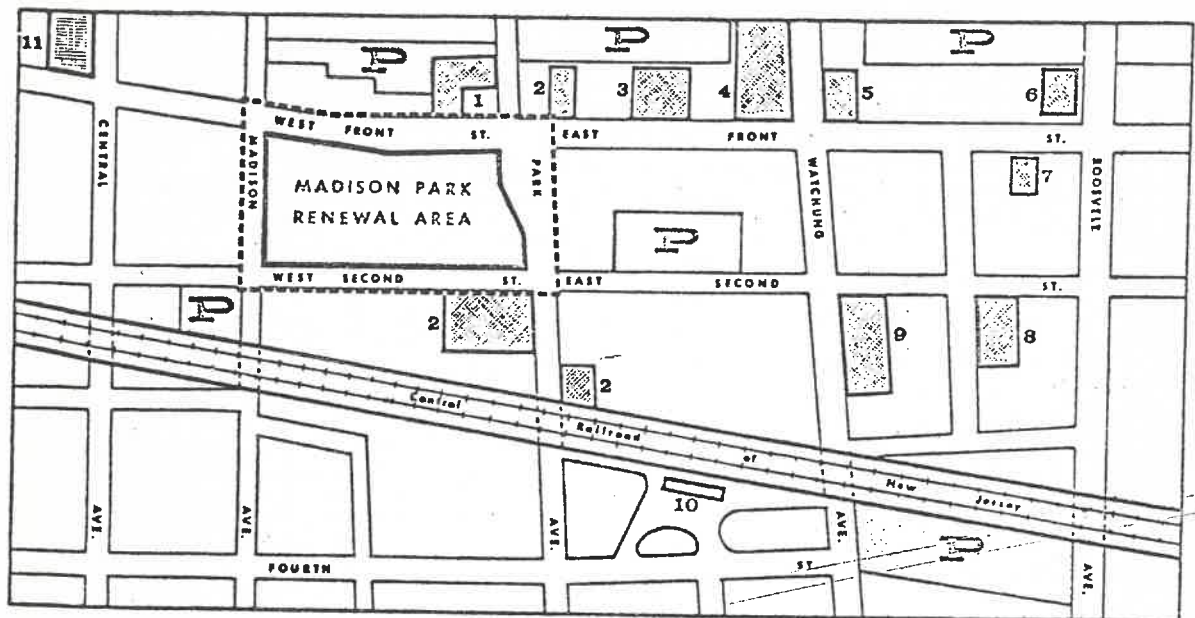
⁴¹Robert C. Wood, Suburbia: Its People and Their Politics (Boston, 1959), 222.

⁴²Interview with Irving Velinsky, November 15, 1963.

construction of luxury high-rise apartments. These moves are predicated on the real competition between Plainfield and surrounding political jurisdictions for both the rentables and the middle class.

The Madison-Park Urban Renewal project, under the aegis of the Housing Authority, is an example of the city's search for additional commercial rentables. Bounded by West Front Street, Park Avenue, West Second Street and Madison Avenue this 4-acre plot will be leased to a developer for the construction of a new commercial complex. The process of procuring the land parcels, obtaining federal assistance and finding a developer has been painfully slow. The project was first introduced to the Common Council in 1959. The business community is impatiently awaiting progress, since as the project "drags on", the fear grows that no developer will be found.⁴³

⁴³The Plainfield Area, 50.



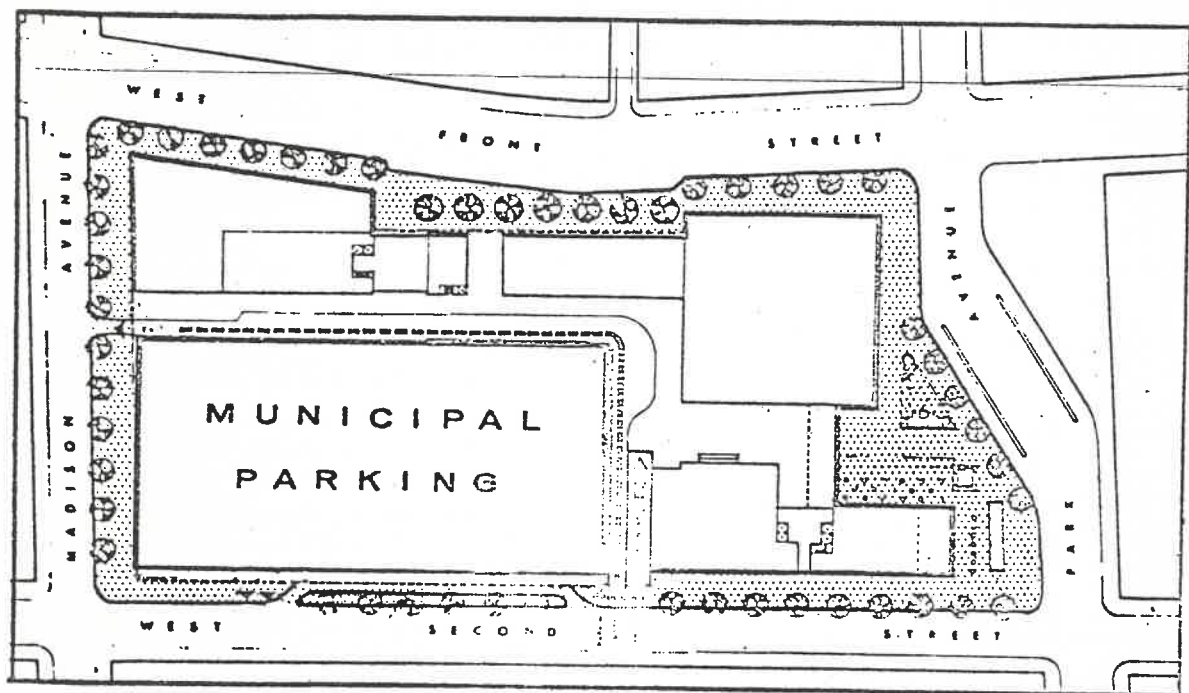
- 1 TEPPER DEPT. STORE
2 PLAINFIELD TRUST
3 R. J. GORKE & CO.

- 4 UNION BUILDING
5 SUBURBAN TRUST CO.
6 SAMBERGER DEPT. STORE

- 7 STATE BANK OF PLAINFIELD
8 COURIER NEWS
9 POST OFFICE

- 10 PLAINFIELD STATION
11 SEARS
P MUNICIPAL PARKING
--- PROJECT BOUNDARY

These maps show the downtown section of Plainfield to be renewed under Federal assistance. It is to include new stores, offices and possibly a theater, civic center or hotel. Progress on Madison Park has been slow so far.



CHAPTER FOUR

THE AWAKENING

CHAPTER FOUR

SOCIAL INTEGRATION

The concept of social integration, as expressed in the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court desegregation decisions, implanted itself as the major goal of Plainfield's activist Negro leadership. The impact of this sophistication of Negro aims had an immediate effect, but the full implications of this mode of thought, actively pursued, were not to manifest themselves for at least a half-dozen years.

From its inception, the local branch of the NAACP had worked quietly, but assiduously, at eliminating the humiliating color bars existing in the city.

After the Supreme Court decision, the Negroes raised the issues of racial conflict to a more complex level and their tactics, employed to achieve them, became more forthright. In seeking social integration, the Plainfield Negro had ventured onto thinner ice. Instead of pushing Plainfield to catch up to other northern cities in its treatment of the Negro, the NAACP was now pressing for the city to experiment on the frontier of American sociological experience. Not only were Negro demands novel, but by attempting to eliminate the housing and school segregation imposed by the whites, the NAACP was impinging directly on the lives of all white Plainfielders and therefore eliciting their

virulent contempt. But the credo of integration had caught fire and the Negroes were determined white opposition would not quell it.

Integration in Action

The Plainfield YMCA Board of Trustees authorized a fund drive in 1955 to rebuild its Moorland Branch which was located in the West End Negro neighborhood. The branch, situated in a badly deteriorated building, had served Negro youngsters in the West End area since the mid-1920s. The program and facilities of the Moorland Y had always been inadequate. The fund drive for a modern structure on the site received the support of white civic leaders and a good number of Negro church leaders and neighborhood residents.

Fire swept the decrepit old building in the middle of the fund drive and destroyed it completely. The impetus for the new building was heightened by the disaster. Soon nearly \$200,000 of the \$380,000 goal had been collected, in pledges and cash. The fire had also ignited the spark of social integration among the Negro militants. Dr. Clement de Freitas, back in Plainfield, and several others urged the local NAACP to reject the reconstruction of the Moorland Branch, because its replacement would inevitably be a "segregated facility." Then, a field secretary for the National Council of the YMCA visited Plainfield in the spring of 1956 and advised the Negroes his organization was

committed to an interracial policy and had closed Ys similar to the Moorland Branch in other eastern cities in order to promote integration in the central units. He also said the nine-tenths of a mile distance between Moorland and the Central Y, on Watchung and West Sixth, was insufficient.

The activist members of the local NAACP adopted a resolution against the rebuilding of Moorland, citing the Negroes' desire and right for social integration. The white reaction to this thoroughly unexpected move was one of perplexed indignation. The Plainfield Courier-News, for instance, found it difficult to understand the opposition of some NAACP members to the new branch. "Plainfield," the editorial noted, "has experienced little agitation with its Negro population over the question of segregation."¹ Several Negro leaders denounced the NAACP clique for its misrepresentation of the issues. They contended the city's Y facilities were integrated.

Mrs. Eva B. Fields, NAACP president, countered her organization would "unalterably oppose" reconstruction of Moorland. She also noted the Y was willing to rebuild the Moorland Branch less than a mile away from the Central Y while the Central simultaneously welcomes white members from towns as distant as Bound Brook. That discrimination exists, "could not be more obvious" she wrote.²

¹Plainfield Courier-News, editorial, May 17, 1956.

²Letter from Mrs. Eva B. Fields, president of the Plainfield Branch NAACP, to the Plainfield YMCA Board of Trustees, June 5, 1956.

The controversy raged all summer while the startled white backers of the fund drive mulled over the new developments. After a lengthy meeting with interested citizens, the YMCA's Board Of Trustees voted, in September, not to rebuild Moorland and instead enlarge and modernize the central branch. The board cited popular opinion, national and local, as a major factor in its decision. As integration increasingly had dominated the picture, the fund drive went progressively worse. The campaign fell far short of its goal. An attempt was made to transfer the pledged and donated funds to the new purposes, but a good many original backers withdrew their financial support. The shock in the white community over the Negroes' integrationist stand was profound.

A quiet transition took place in the next several years. National events and increased exposure to mass communications served to consolidate the new vision of social integration among many of Plainfield's Negroes. Young, educated Negroes, who were moving into the East and West Ends, brought new, more militant attitudes with them. These people gravitated toward the NAACP, and finally wrested the balance of power away from the hesitant conservatives. The quickening pace of national events seemed to have prompted these young people to join the branch out of a sense of duty.³

³Interview with Charles E. Miller, December 27, 1963.
(This will be cited hereafter as Miller Interview.)

The emergence in 1960 of the Rev. Frank Allen as the militant spokesman of the NAACP marks the turning point in the Negro Awakening in Plainfield. Rev. Allen, a former resident of Virginia, had moved during his adolescence to Pennsylvania and thence to New Jersey. He had been a resident of nearby Cranford until 1957, when he built a house in the East End of Plainfield. Allen joined the NAACP and its rather fluid executive board soon after his arrival and was appointed head of the moribund church committee. Immediately he activated the committee and established closer liaison between the organization and the city's church leaders.

Election of the local NAACP branch president evoked little concern in 1959. The importance of the post had never been great and few foresaw that it would become so. Allen was elected president with little fanfare and began to serve the following year. The new president was convinced the local NAACP had not worked hard enough to improve the Negro's lot and had failed to process the increasing number of members' complaints as quickly or as effectively as would be desirable. His demands for stronger and more vocal action were met with indifference and outright resentment by some of the older, settled Negro residents. They told him he was a newcomer and, therefore, did not understand the way things worked in Plainfield. This chestisement only made Allen more eager.⁴

⁴Interview with Rev. Frank W. Allen, February 2, 1964. (This will be cited hereafter as Allen Interview).

It was not long before Rev. Allen had an opportunity to initiate his improved complaint processing. Seven Negro property owners on Raymond Avenue in the East End had been apprised of the city's intention to take from them 75-foot strips of land at the rear of their lots, adjacent to the proposed Berkeley Terrace playground (see map, p. 79-A). The additional land was to be reserved for use as a Little League Field on the Berkeley Terrace site.

The Planning Board adopted the resolution to acquire the strips in December, 1959. In the ensuing months strong protests were lodged by the NAACP on behalf of the property owners. They objected to the reservation of the land and to its proposed use. They claimed the city was freezing the land around Berkeley Terrace for unnecessary playgrounds, to prevent more Negroes from building homes in the Negro neighborhood. The proposal finally reached the Common Council in June, 1961. The chambers were packed with neighborhood residents and Rev. Allen spoke for the NAACP, but the Council passed the land reservation anyway.

THE SCHOOL CRISIS

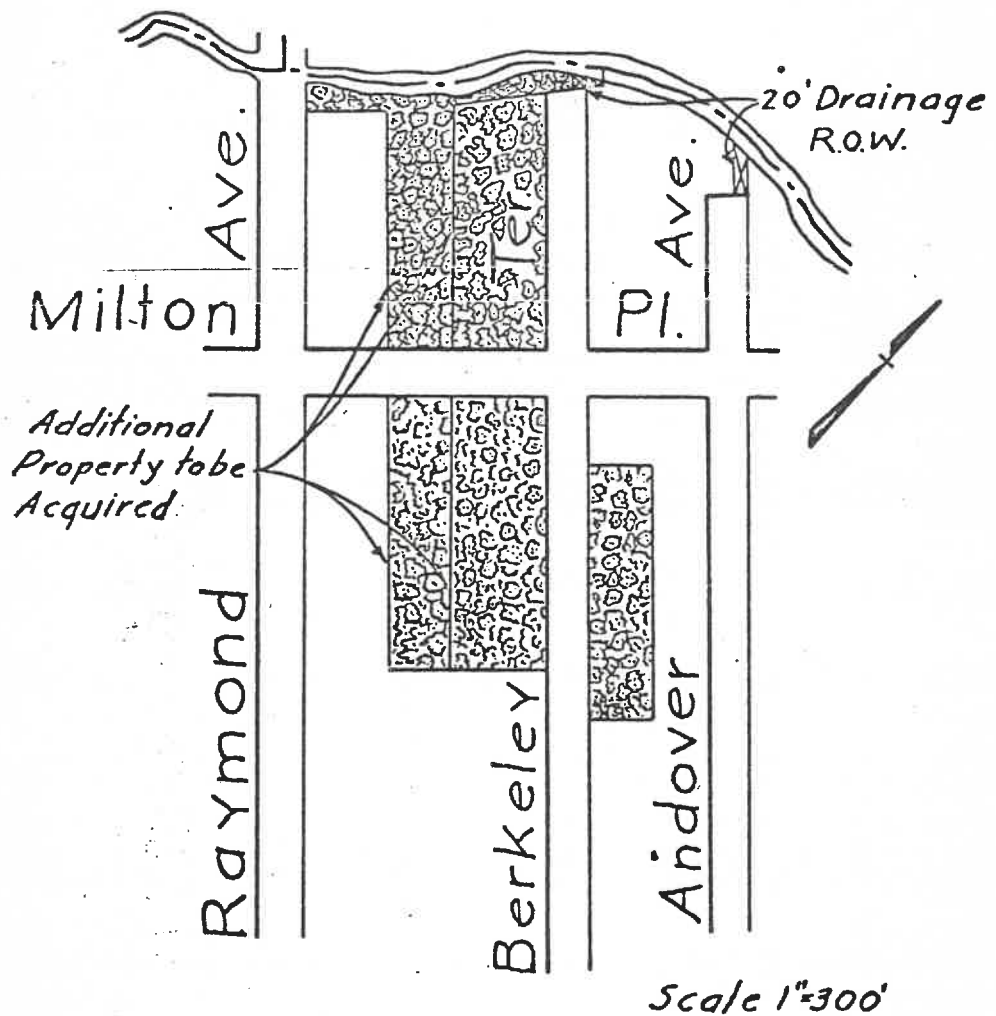
While still fuming about the Berkeley Terrace affair, Rev. Allen noticed a news story which announced the Board of Education was considering a boundary change around the predominantly Negro Washington School. In order to accommodate

A RESOLUTION TO AMEND THE MASTER PLAN OF THE CITY OF PLAINFIELD, NEW JERSEY, ADOPTED BY THE PLANNING BOARD ON DECEMBER 16, 1959

MP-1

RESOLVED, That the item "Establish Berkley Terrace Playgro in III-B of the text be amended to read "Acquire Additional Property, and Establish Berkeley Terrace Playgrounds." Be it

FURTHER RESOLVED, That the map entitled, "Master Plan, C of Plainfield, New Jersey, 1959," be revised to indicate the acquisition properties from the rear of lots fronting on Raymond Avenue from 48 Raymond Avenue to and including 96 Raymond Avenue, the west boundary of said acquisition of properties to be a line, 243± feet measured at right angles from and parallel to the southwesterly side of Berkeley Terrace, and the acquisition of all of lot 22, Block 17, City of Plainfield Tax Maps, all of said properties to be reserved playground purposes.



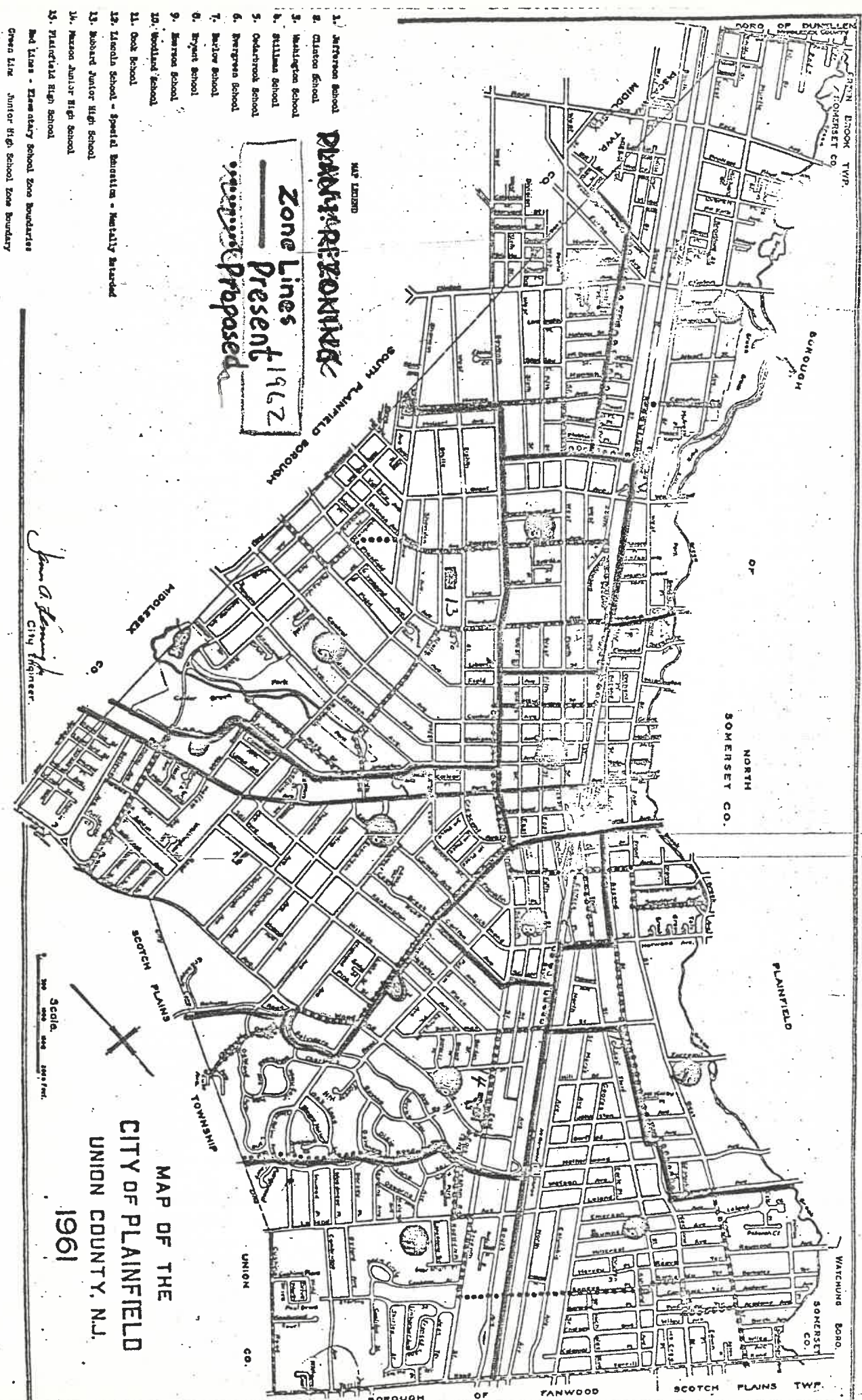
MAP REVISION

Adopted by the Planning Board of the City of Plainfield on March 15, 1960

in the Stillman School the pupils from the new Elmwood Gardens housing project, the common boundary, between Stillman and Washington, was ^{to be} shifted to the east from Plainfield Avenue to Liberty Street. The rectangular area to be appended to the Washington district was heavily Negro.

Although Rev. Allen was admittedly "mad at the city for the playground business", his appearance at the May 16, 1961 Board of Education meeting was motivated by deeper influences.⁵ Frequent complaints from Negro parents about learning conditions in Washington School and NAACP-inspired efforts to correct school racial imbalances in nearby metropolitan area cities (e.g., New Rochelle, N.Y. and Englewood, N.J.) had aroused Rev. Allen's interest in the matter. Speaking twice before the Board, Allen charged de facto segregation exists in Plainfield schools and inferred the races had been consciously separated. To support the latter contention he noted the under-utilization of the Washington School and the over-utilization of the predominantly white Cedarbrook School. The two schools shared West Seventh Street as a district boundary line (see map, p. 80-A). Allen implied Seventh Street was really a racial barrier and not a traditional dividing line.

⁵Ibid.



John A. Smith
 City Engineer.

Rev. Allen's charges exploded a controversy which challenged the fundamental assumptions underlying the appeal of the suburban community. They laid bare the racial prejudices, anxieties and distrust which had long seethed below the surface. Negro assertiveness in this suburban-oriented city was incongruous, if not downright absurd.

Had not the quality of the "sacred" school system been questioned? Had not the possibility of more highly integrated schools been raised? Had not the integrity of the impartial Board of Education been questioned? To the Plainfielder, like the typical suburbanite, Rev. Allen's audacity was astounding. These people had moved to suburbia in search of better schools, higher status, neighborhood exclusiveness and trustworthy government. Now all these foundation blocks of suburban living were about to be undermined, so thought white Plainfield.

To the average white homeowner, any tampering with the school system with the purpose of racial integration, entailing zoning changes, extensive bussing of pupils or other forms of re-alignment would lower educational standards, destroy the high status of the white neighborhood schools and most probably lower property values. Integration of a suburban school system, therefore, is generally held a threat to the essential security and status of the "nice" neighborhood and its neighborhood school.

The situation in Plainfield was somewhat aggravated by the tremendous pride its citizens have always held for their school system. The high school has a long tradition of sending sizable numbers of its graduates to "name" colleges. Dr. James B. Conant, while researching for his book, The American High School Today, visited Plainfield High. He rated it one of the fifty high quality secondary schools he observed which offered a good comprehensive program.⁶ His evaluation has often been embellished upon by the local citizenry. This self-satisfaction had been further buttressed from such an unlikely source as the 1947 Northtown Survey which had found extensive racial discrimination in housing, employment and public accommodations. On discrimination in the city's educational system, the survey stated, the Negroes had the least to complain about here.⁷ Compounded by these incongruities and ironies, the school crisis provides an X-ray view of the troubled city of Plainfield.⁸

Some Negroes had long been bothered by the disproportionately high Negro enrollments in several schools, notably Washington and Stillman, the small number of Negro teachers employed in the system, the quality of teaching at predominantly Negro schools and the historic non-representation of

⁶Interview with Joseph Ennis, Assistant Superintendent of Plainfield public schools, March 3, 1964 (telephone).

⁷American Jewish Congress, Northtown Survey on Human Relations (Plainfield, 1947), 62.

⁸Miller Interview

the Negro community on the appointive 5-member Board of Education.

Two months after Rev. Allen first levelled his charges, a conference was arranged between the Board and the NAACP. Prior to the meeting, the NAACP was permitted to scrutinize the history of school zone changes in Plainfield. [The NAACP group, assisted by Miss June Shageloff of the national NAACP Educational Division, reviewed school zone development. Little accord could be reached over racial imbalance, but the Negroes did repress their underlying belief zone lines had been consciously gerrymandered.

As a means to divert an immediate desegregation lawsuit by the NAACP, Superintendent of Schools Victor J. Podesta urged the Board appoint a lay committee, with assistance from professional sociologists, which would study "in considerable depth, the racial composition of the elementary schools."⁹ The committee was to act independently of the Board. In September 1961 the Board approved the appointment of the lay committee.

With permission from the Board of Education, the NAACP education committee conducted a racial census of the public schools. They found Washington School to be more than 90 per cent Negro, asserted five other schools - Emerson, Stillman,

⁹Dr. Victor J. Podesta, Superintendent's Report to Plainfield Board of Education, September 27, 1961, 2.

Bryant, Clinton and Jefferson - were becoming segregated and unless something were done to relieve the situation there would be, within a few years, two or three Washington Schools.

Meanwhile, the Board of Education's Lay Advisory Committee was appointed. It contained a representative cross-section of Plainfield opinion.¹⁰ Some Negroes thought it was stacked against them.¹¹ Because the New Jersey Constitution prohibits schools to keep racial records, the group's first task was to determine, on its own, the racial composition of the elementary schools. Then, the Lay Committee was to judge the effect of "de facto segregated" education, if it did exist, on the children involved. Finally, the committee was to make necessary recommendations to the board.

Although the NAACP remained suspicious of the Board of Education for both its zoning policies and its recourse to a "cross-section" Lay Advisory Committee, the Negro organization agreed to withhold legal action until the committee could make its report. The NAACP, for the time being, was "committed to a cooperative community-wide approach."¹² Pressures from the national organization almost upset the

¹⁰Comment by Reuben Lefkowitz, Chairman of Lay Advisory Committee to public meeting, Minutes of the Plainfield Board of Education Lay Advisory Committee, May 7, 1962, 1. (This work will hereafter be cited as L.A.C. Minutes.)

¹¹Miller Interview

¹²Comment by Charles Miller, L.A.C. Minutes, May 7, 1962, 7.

agreement in February 1962.

After three months of hassling over whether to employ a consultant, the Lay Advisory Committee moved to contract Dr. Max Wolff of Rutgers University and his team of researchers to conduct a three-month "careful and detailed study in considerable depth of the racial composition of the elementary schools with particular emphasis on the educational impact on the children who attend the 'so-called' segregated schools."¹³ As a harbinger of things to come, one member of the L.A.C. questioned if professionals always came up with the same solutions.¹⁴

The position of Superintendent Podesta throughout the controversy was a curious one. When asked by the lay committee to defend the Board of Education's refusal to zone north-south around the Washington School across West Seventh Street, Podesta could not do so except to say, to his knowledge, the board used principles of school utilization. On the Open Enrollment Plan, which the board was to adopt in June 1962, Podesta told the L.A.C. that as implemented in New Rochelle, N.Y., "it is open only to Negroes to transfer and it usually leaves the same problem racial imbalance because not many change."¹⁵

¹³L.A.C. Minutes, February 27, 1962, 2.

¹⁴Comment by Osman Fort, L.A.C. Minutes, March 13, 1962, 2.

¹⁵Comment by Dr. Victor J. Podesta, L.A.C. Minutes, February 8, 1962, 6.

The entire Wolff Report, entitled A Study of Racial Imbalance in the Plainfield Public Schools, was presented to the Lay Advisory Committee on June 20, 1962. Prepared solely from quantitative data supplied by the Board of Education concerning achievement tests, building facilities, teaching and administrative staffing, the report found that 37 per cent of the elementary school population was Negro. Negro children attended all but one (Cook) school. The Washington School was 95 per cent Negro, comprising 30 per cent of the city's Negro elementary school enrollment. Only 26 per cent of Plainfield's Negro children attended schools which were "optimally" integrated (i.e., between 24 and 49 per cent Negro around the 37 per cent "fulcrum" percentage), while 68 per cent of the Negro elementary school population went to racially imbalanced (50 per cent or more) schools. Three schools - Cedarbrook, Evergreen and Cook - were more than 94 per cent white. Of the white school population, 24 per cent received an integrated education, while 51 per cent attended schools with few or no Negroes.¹⁶ (See Table IV, p. 86-A.)

The Wolff Report defined a de facto segregated school as one "which, because of its high degree of racial homogeneity, is locally considered to be a 'Negro school' or a 'White

¹⁶Dr. Max Wolff, A Study of Racial Imbalance in the Plainfield Public Schools (Plainfield, 1962), A-1 to A-5. (This work will hereafter be cited as Wolff Report).

TABLE IV

RACIAL COMPOSITION,
PUBLIC ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS, March 1962

<u>School</u>	<u>Total Pupils</u>	<u>Negro</u>	<u>White & Other</u>	<u>Pct. Negro</u>
Washington	589	560	28	95.1
Emerson	525	340	185	64.8
Stillman	365	217	148	59.5
Eryant	234	134	100	57.3
Clinton	356	163	192	45.8
Jefferson	574	248	325	43.2
Barlow	278	67	211	24.1
Woodland	439	66	373	15.0
Cedarbrook	677	35	642	5.2
Evergreen	518	14	504	2.7
Cook	495	0	495	0.0
Lincoln (Special)	<u>94</u>	<u>61</u>	<u>33</u>	<u>64.9</u>
Totals	5,144	1,905	3,236	37.0

Table A-1, A Study of Racial Balance in the Plainfield Public Schools, p. A-2.

school'. In Plainfield, certainly any school attended by 90 per cent or more of one racial group is clearly of this character.¹⁷ Due to the youth of Plainfield's Negroes (a median age of 27 compared to whites' median age of 34), the Negroes' higher fertility rate¹⁸ and inroads made on the white elementary school population by the city's two parochial schools, the report warned that "even a small white out-migration and Negro in-migration into neighborhoods of unbalanced schools will create the danger of Plainfield's having not one, but two or three segregated schools."¹⁹ As corroborating proof, the Negro school population jumped by eight per cent between 1960 and 1962.

Basing its opinion on court decisions and sociological findings, the report stated that de facto segregated schools are a deprivation of equal educational and social opportunity. It contended integration "has come to be recognized as a principle of primary importance, overriding, when necessary, the concept of neighborhood schools."²⁰ To support this general belief the Wolff Report noted that on objective measurements (pupil achievement, administrative load, percentage of teachers tenure, remedial reading help and several others) the Washington School was found "consistently in the

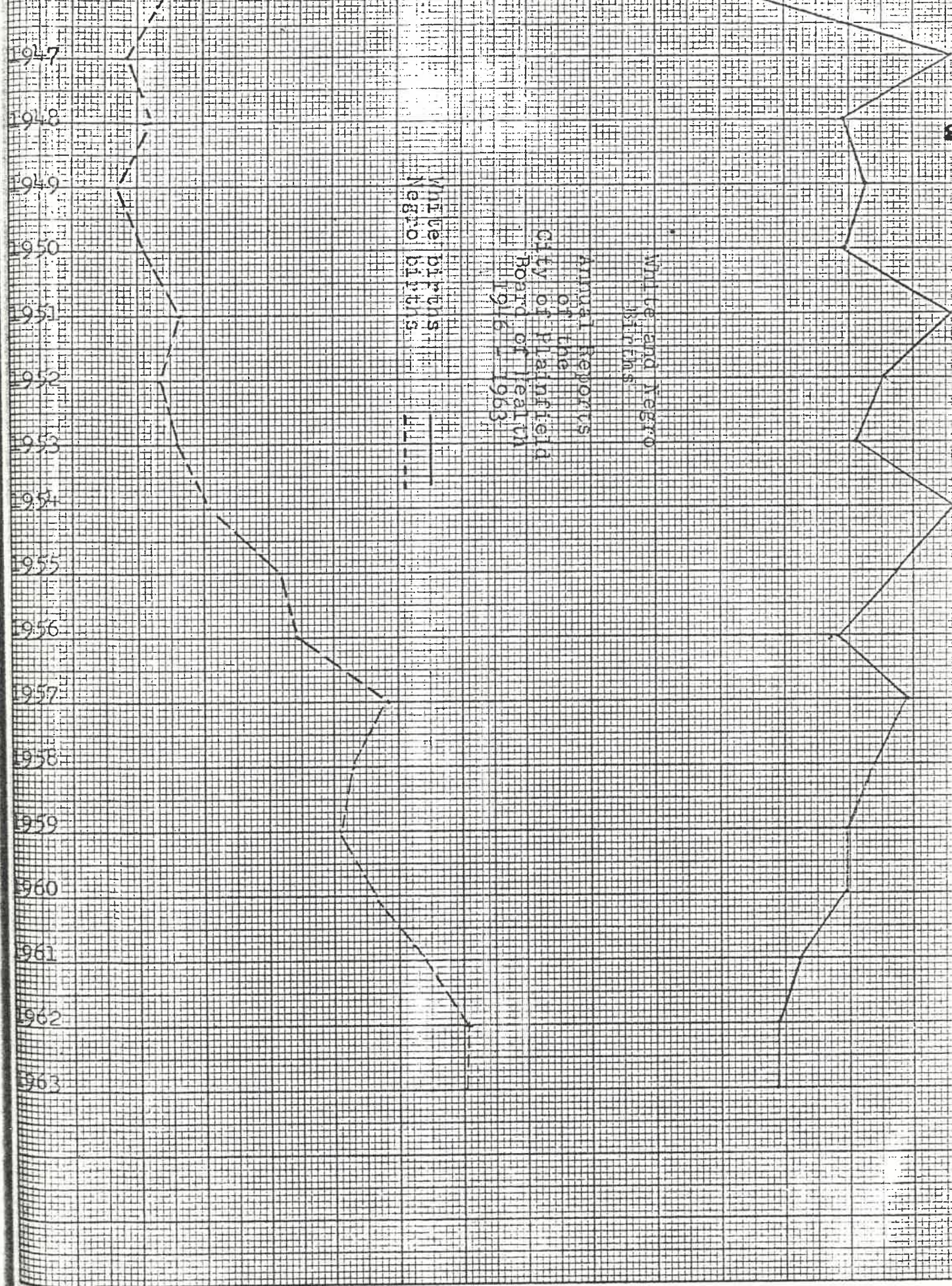
¹⁷Ibid., A-1.

¹⁸U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1960 PC(1) 32-B, N.J., Table 20, p. 72.

¹⁹Wolff Report, A-6 to A-12.

²⁰Ibid., C-9.

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lower ranks ... Taken together these deprivations do affect adversely the quality of the education provided at Washington, and reflect the general low esteem in which the school is held in the community."²¹ It was found 39 per cent of the Washington School pupils were one year or more behind in reading. Over an average of five years the gap between Washington and schools with less than 10 per cent Negro enrollment was 2 years, one month in the fourth grade and one year, nine months in the sixth grade. This lag is reflected in the high school where 66 per cent of the Negro children were placed in the "Y" or slowest English tract. The report suggested a re-evaluation of the remedial reading program.²²

Due to the low status of the school, the teacher turnover rate at Washington School was high - 114 per cent of the staff had left in the years 1957-1962 inclusive.²³ At a pre-publication public meeting in May 1962, Dr. Wolff noted that studies in other communities had revealed a peculiar change of attitude, aside from disdain, on the part of teachers when working with Negro youngsters. A kind of permissiveness resulted, he said, because the teacher recognized the underprivileged condition of the Negro child and deduced that his education was not as important as another child's.²⁴

²¹Ibid., B-6.

²²Ibid., B-39.

²³Ibid., B-15.

²⁴Comments by Dr. Max Wolff, L.A.C. Minutes, May 7, 1962, 3.

The report offered two plans to correct the racial imbalance of the entire school system. Plan One consisted of a north-south rezoning of all schools. This was chosen because almost the entire Negro school population lives north of the Seventh Street "barrier". If school zones were drawn across the historical dividing line, racial balance could be improved. Except in two cases (see Table V, p. 89-A) the racial composition of all schools would fall within the optimal range and classroom utilization would not be worsened apparently. The chief disadvantage of this plan, from Wolff's point of view, was that zoning would have to be revised periodically.

Plan Two, or the sister-school plan, would dissolve district lines between three pairs of adjacent school zones (Washington and Cedarbrook, Stillman and Evergreen, Emerson and Cook) and divide the pupils on a grade basis, generally grades one through three and four through six. This plan would achieve racial balance throughout the system, improve utilization of the schools and provide stability. (See Table VI, p. 89-B). Its disadvantages included longer walking distances and greater immediate disruption.

INTEGRATION BY COMPULSION

The Lay Advisory Committee rejected the Wolff proposals outright and refused to accept the premise that a 93 per cent Negro school has a bad educational effect on the

TABLE V

PROPOSED REZONING PLAN

PLAN I

<u>School</u>	<u>Utiliza- tion¹</u>	<u>Present Pct. of Negro Pupils</u>	<u>Proposed Utiliza- tion</u>	<u>Planned Pct. of Negro Pupils</u>
Washington	88%	95	74%	45
Emerson	60%	65	59%	45
Stillman	98%	60	100%	52
Bryant	88%	57	--	Closed
Clinton	84%	46	71%	46
Jefferson	86%	43	78%	45
Barlow	74%	24	87%	37
Woodland	87%	15	103%	32
Cedarbrook	116%	5	112%	31
Evergreen	72%	3	108%	32
Cook	89%	0	101%	15

Table C-2, Wolff Report, p. C-4.

¹Utilization means the percent of capacity now in use. School capacity is computed by multiplying the number of good classrooms by 27, the desirable class size.

- 89-B -

TABLE VI

PROPOSED SISTER SCHOOL PLAN

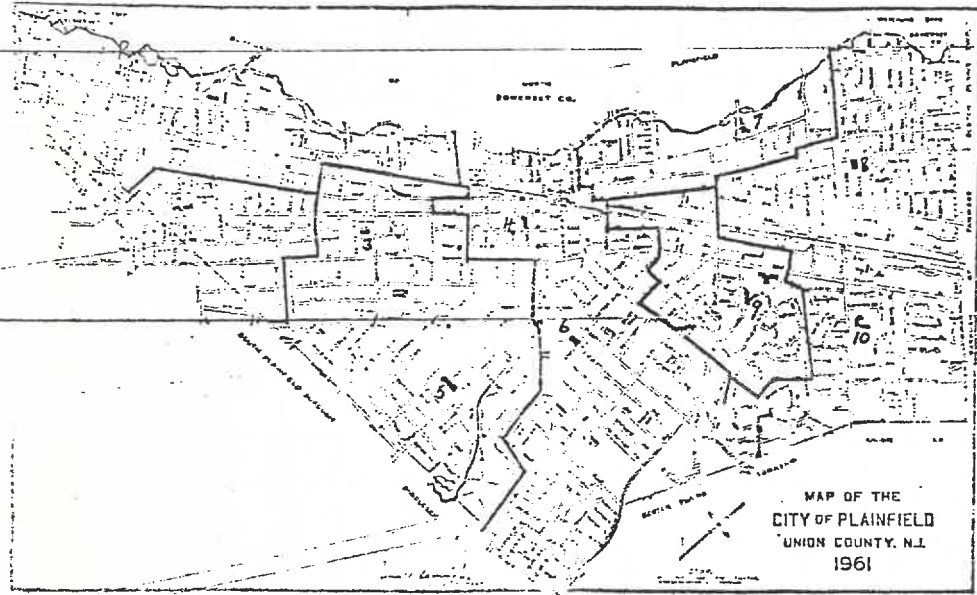
PLAN II

<u>School</u>	<u>Present</u>		<u>Proposed</u>		
	<u>Pct. Negro</u>	<u>Utiliza- tion</u>	<u>Organiza- tion</u>	<u>Utiliza- tion</u>	<u>Pct. Negro</u>
Washington	95	88%	K,4-6	76%	46
Cederbrook	5	116%	K,1-3	104%	35
Stillman	60	98%	K,5-6	92%	40
Evergreen	3	72%	K,1-4	96%	31
Emerson	55	60%	K,4-6	62%	36
Cook	0	89%	K,1-3	100%	26
Jefferson	43	86%	K-6	98%	47
Woodland	15	87%	K-6	96%	31
Barlow	24	74%	K-6	79%	27
Bryant	57	88%	Closed	--	--
Clinton	46	84%	Unchanged	--	46

Table C-2, Wolff Report, p. C-7.

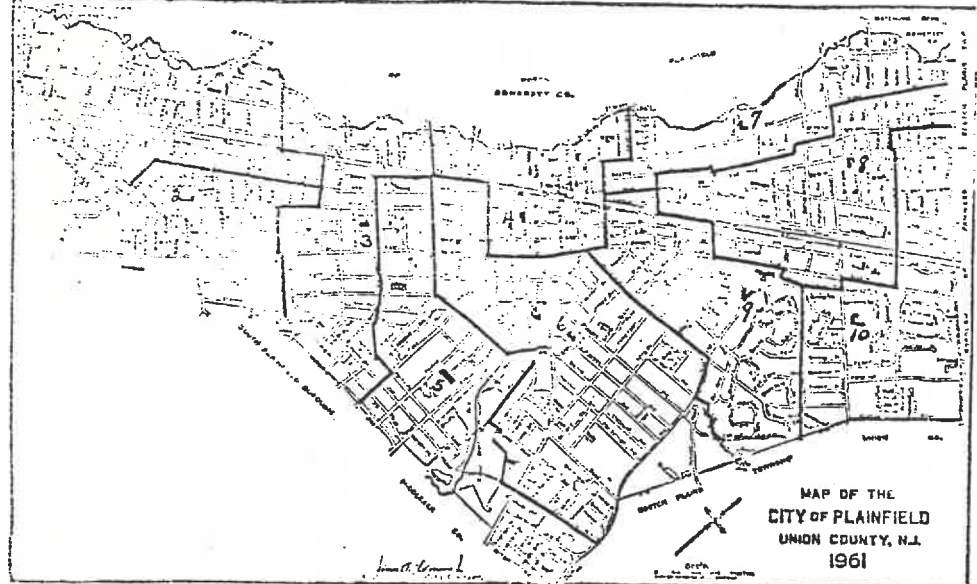
THE COURIER-NEWS

PLAINFIELD, NEW JERSEY, WEDNESDAY, JULY 17, 1963



Wolff
Sister School
Plan

WOLFF SISTER-SCHOOL PLAN — The second plan offered in Wolff Report to correct racial imbalance in Plainfield schools was so-called "sister school plan." This proposed to consolidate three school districts (2 and 3, 4 and 6, and 10) the first in each pair a heavily Negro residential area and the second, a predominantly white district. Under the plan, students at Washington (2) and Cedarbrook (3), Emerson (4) and Stillman (6), Barlow (8) and Emerson (10) would be pooled into three consolidated districts and then entire grades would be allotted to each "sister" school. This plan was also bypassed by the Board of Education, when the board was ordered to correct racial imbalance.



Wolff
Rezoning
Plan

WOLFF REZONING PLAN — The above map shows proposed rezoning of school districts to correct racial imbalance in Plainfield as outlined in report by Dr. Max Wolff to Board of Education's Tax Advisory Committee. The board bypassed this alternative in favor of its own "Sixth Grade Plan" when ordered to correct racial imbalance by state Commissioner of Education. The legend of schools is as follows: 1. Jefferson; 2. Clinton; 3. Washington; 4. Stillman; 5. Cedarbrook; 6. Emerson; 7. Barlow; 8. Emerson; 9. Woodland; 10. Oak.

children attending it. The majority of the committee offered a three-pronged set of its own recommendations. The majority's report stressed possible impingements on the white group must be considered as highly as the benefits which might accrue to the Negro if an integration program were put into effect. It cautioned: "We must bear in mind the attitudes and social reactions in order to avoid violent repercussions of hostility developing towards serious tension between the races."²⁵

In a section entitled "Observations", the report rather off-handedly dismissed the efficacy of integration as a means to improve Negro achievement - in Plainfield or anywhere else. Moreover, it noted that integration within a political jurisdiction as small as Plainfield will only accelerate population mobility, i.e., frighten away whites.

Underlying these assertions were the fears, as expressed by L.A.C. member and local realtor Calvin Schwartz that "If Plan One or Plan Two were adopted and carried out, Plainfield would be predominantly Negro ... by 1970 ... This town is in competition with other towns," Schwartz warned. "We would be replacing our higher income group with a lower income group."²⁶

²⁵ Majority Report of the Plainfield Board of Education Lay Advisory Committee, June 20, 1962, 2.

²⁶ Comments by Calvin Schwartz, L.A.C. Minutes, June 20, 1962, 5.

William Elliott, a leading Plainfield lawyer and former president of the New Jersey Sons of the Revolution, told his fellow committee members that he would never have any part of a policy which would shift white students to lower status schools to improve racial balance. These attitudes led some Negroes to believe the lay committee's majority was composed of people whose minds had been set beforehand and who did not want to be confused with the facts. A Negro assertion in suburbia had resolved little; it only revealed the whites' incomprehension of the Negro viewpoint. As to the value of integration itself, the answer remained to most Plainfielders as moot as before.

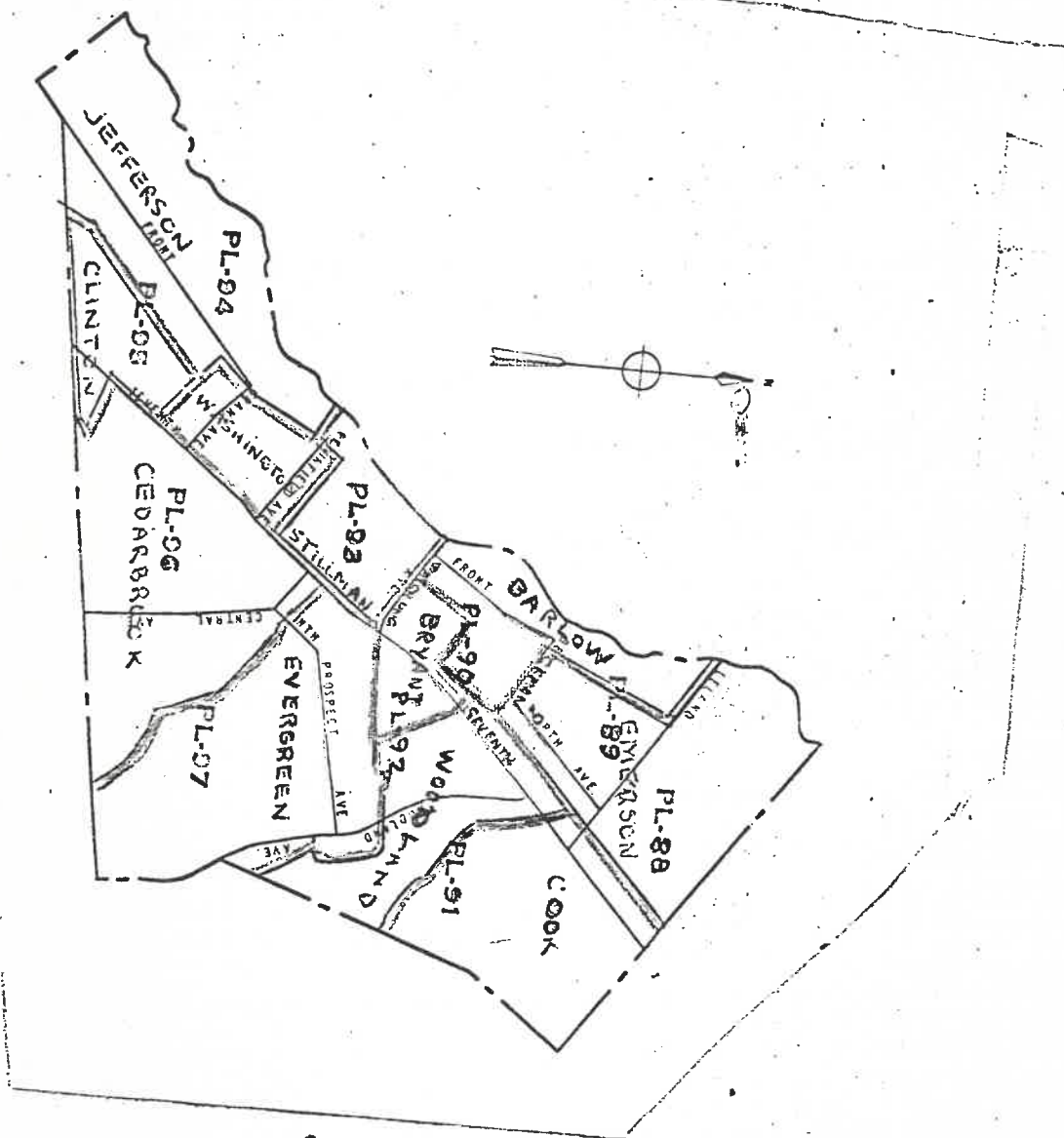
The majority did propose a zone change around the Washington School (breaking the Seventh Street line) "to create a more favorable" racial balance there, urged the board examine racial composition when and where it becomes acute as at Washington and suggested the implementation of a "Higher Horizons" program within the school system. "Higher Horizons" for Negro youngsters meant smaller-than-usual class sizes, specialized teaching, increased assignment of special teachers and the employment of social workers to improve the school-home environment. Eventually 12 of the 17 L.A.C. members subscribed to the majority report. A minority report, filed by Charles Miller, attacked the majority's "Observations",

called "Higher Horizons" an expensive way "to circumvent meaningful integration," and expressed a preference for Wolff's Sister-School Plan.

The NAACP, of course, found the lay committee's majority report unsatisfactory. Rev. Allen, near the height of his pique, made the first of a long line of incendiary statements by objecting to the report because it left untouched the "most segregated" Cook School. If Allen was scaring a few Negroes away with his tactlessness, the Wolff Report and his own courageous stand had awakened many others and NAACP membership rolls showed it. But, for the Negro leadership the worst was yet to come.

At a Board of Education meeting in late June 1962 a petition was presented by Cedarbrook district parents whose children would be affected by the L.A.C.'s proposed zone change across West Seventh Street. (See map and descriptive material, p.92 -A ~~and B.~~) By sending their children to the Washington School, the Cedarbrook petitioners argued, the Board would "create a greater social evil which will unreasonably affect the health and safety of the children involved and will drastically affect the normal home life and environment created by parents." A realtor stated his firm had received "20 calls from people who wanted to list their homes for sale" when the Wolff Report was published.²⁷

²⁷Plainfield Courier-News, June 29, 1962.



Superimposed on a census tract map of plainfield are the school zones as they existed before the implementation of the "Sixth Grade Plan", September 1963.

July proved to be the month of decision. The Board of Education rejected rezoning between Washington and Cedarbrook, because such an action "could be interpreted as gerrymandering to establish racial balance." Taking into consideration the "educational welfare of all the children", the Board rejected the Wolff proposals and attacked their practicability on grounds of poor utilization, longer walking distances, excessive disruption and costliness. The Board questioned the validity of Wolff's estimates of the pre-school population and his proof that poor achievement in the Washington School was accountable to segregated education and not to a high Negro enrollment. The board added that further studies are needed to single out more accurately the educational effects of racially imbalanced schools. It agreed with sociological evidence that the Negro's capacity to learn does not differ from the white's and that specific steps should be taken to improve Negro educational performance, but "the school, the home, and the community share the responsibility for providing the necessary motivation as well as the opportunity to receive the maximum benefit of public education."²⁸ In essence, the board was willing only to take the most limited of steps.

Based on the Lay Advisory Committee's recommendations and a policy statement by State Commissioner of Education

²⁸ Report of the Plainfield Board of Education, July 27, 1962.

Frederick M. Raubinger that "reasonable means consistent with sound educational and administrative practices" must be employed to eliminate or reduce racial imbalance, the Board offered its Optional Pupil Registration Plan.²⁹ O.P.R.P. was essentially the same plan Superintendent Podesta had said provided little change in New Rochelle, and was generally discredited as a means to alter racial imbalance in the schools.³⁰ Under O.P.R.P. the neighborhood policy was still in effect. Parents, however, could request that pupils be permitted to enroll in any school outside their zone of residence providing classrooms in the requested school were available and parents agreed to supply the necessary transportation and lunches if long distances were involved.³¹

Approximately 1,200 persons attended the meeting at which the Board adopted the plan. A 750-name petition supporting the Wolff proposals, was presented to the Board but no action was taken. In announcing tentative plans for protest demonstrations, Rev. Allen drew the community's ire by tactlessly referring to the Board as "lily-white" and terming Plainfield a "one-horse town."³² He was loudly hissed for the latter comment. Yet the presence of a great

²⁹Plainfield Board of Education, Proposed Elementary School Enrollment Policy, July 17, 1962. (This will be cited hereafter as O.P.R.P.).

³⁰U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1963 Report of the United States Commission on Civil Rights (Washington, 1963), 59.

³¹O.P.R.P.

³²Plainfield Courier-News, August 1, 1962.

many Negroes at the meeting confirmed that the Plainfield Negro was indeed awakening to the integration call. The publicity accorded the Wolff Report and all that followed had helped coalesce Negro support. Although there were an estimated 530 available vacancies under C.P.R.P., only 61 were processed successfully. The transfers were split nearly even between white and Negro children. Dissatisfied with this limited modification of the neighborhood school plan, 28 parents, sponsored by the local NAACP branch, with the legal assistance of the national organization, filed a petition with Commissioner Raubinger on September 4, 1962. In its brief, the NAACP accused the Board of maintaining, by compulsory assignment, racially segregated schools which resulted in a denial of equal educational opportunities for the affected Negro children. It noted that 90 per cent of the city's Negro elementary enrollment was concentrated in six schools, while in five other schools Negroes comprised only 10 per cent of the school population. Furthermore, the NAACP complained that the Board of Education had refused to implement any of the plans submitted which would eliminate patterns of segregation in the public schools. The brief concluded that the Board was "insistent upon maintaining and perpetuating" the racial imbalance "it knows to exist."³³

As the Optional Pupil Registration Plan went into

³³Petition of Booker, et. al v. Board of Education of the City of Plainfield, September 4, 1962.

effect and the legal action initiated, the NAACP decided to withhold public demonstrations and await the decision from Trenton. Meanwhile, the Plainfield Board of Education responded to the Booker petition by denying it maintained a school system in which there was racial segregation. The Board also contended its elementary school zones were established on sound educational principles and that there is no affirmative constitutional or legal duty to alter these areas for the sole purpose of maintaining any particular percentage of pupil distribution by color or race.

Events and attitudes on the state level began to play a very important role in shaping Plainfield's racial controversy. Originally, Governor Richard J. Hughes had supported the neighborhood school concept wholeheartedly. He had stated public school racial imbalance was an unfortunate outgrowth of segregated housing patterns but neighborhood schools should not be upset to correct it. In the June 1962 Englewood School case the Governor amended his stand under heavy pressure from Negro leaders. He reaffirmed the state's belief in the neighborhood school system, but added that it must yield where it fosters de facto school segregation. The alteration in the Governor's position was reflected in the opinions of his political appointee, the Commissioner of Education, in the Englewood and other school cases.³⁴

³⁴Interview with George Mutnick, counsel for the Plainfield Council for Educational Progress, December 18, 1963. (This will be hereafter cited as Mutnick Interview).

The Plainfield Board, while awaiting the Commissioner's ruling, observed the trend of thought in Trenton and came to the realization that Raubinger would side, to some degree at least, with the petitioners. Yet the Board considered the Wolff proposals still unacceptable, to the consensus of the Plainfield community and to the Board members' own predilections. In March 1963 the Board designed an alternate plan which could be submitted to Raubinger. Charles Miller, educational chairman of the NAACP, was called to a Board meeting on March 17. At this conference, the Board presented to Miller the outline of what was to become known as the "Sixth Grade Plan". In this proposal the Washington School would be converted into a sixth grade school for the entire elementary school system, and its district's pupils (K - 5) would be distributed among the six elementary schools with predominantly white enrollments. Miller brought the plan the following day before the NAACP executive board. The plan was unanimously rejected.³⁵

Nothing more was heard about it until the June 13 hearing before the Assistant State Commissioner. The Plainfield Board of Education re-introduced the "Sixth Grade Plan", this time as a formal alternative to the Wolff proposals for correction of racial imbalance.

³⁵Miller interview.

A statement issued by Board members John B. Friebely and Martin Kestenbaum explained the Board's recourse to the "Sixth Grade Plan":

Although at the time the Plainfield case was pending, it was apparent that Plainfield's Washington School was no different from the Oakwood School in Orange where in *Fisher, et.al. v. Board*, May 15, 1963 Reubinger ruled a 99 per cent Negro school constituted invidious segregation and the Plainfield Board lost no time in seeking a way to comply with the Commissioner's new decision which was lauded by the Governor as the first of its kind in the nation.³⁶

Cognizant of the Commissioner's limited mandate, i.e., relief must be granted where school populations are nearly 100 per cent Negro,³⁷ the Board moved to ready a plan to relieve racial imbalance at Washington School before it was compelled to do so. Friebely and Kestenbaum went on to explain the "Sixth Grade Plan" had been selected by the Board because it was the "least disruptive" one which would comply, it "noticeably altered racial balance where feasible" in other schools in the system and it allowed for utilization of existing classroom facilities in such a way as to defray the expenses of transporting the children involved. They inferred the idea was copied from the Englewood, N.J. school board, which had approved such a plan.³⁸

³⁶Joint Statement of John B. Friebely and Martin Kestenbaum, members of the Plainfield Board of Education, published in *Plainfield Courier-News*, August 22, 1963.

³⁷U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, *loc. cit.*, 56.

³⁸Joint Statement, *loc. cit.*

The Commissioner's opinion on the Plainfield case was issued June 26, 1963. He ruled the extreme concentration (96 per cent) of Negro pupils in the Washington School must be eliminated because such a school, enforced by compulsory assignment, engenders feelings and attitudes which tend to interfere with successful learning. Where means exist to prevent it (implying the Optional Pupil Registration Plan was inadequate), he stated that extreme racial imbalance constitutes a deprivation of education under New Jersey law for the pupils compelled to attend. In answer to the respondent Board's contention that it had no affirmative constitutional or legal duty to alter school districts for the sole purpose of achieving racial balance, Raubinger said:

[Even though the underlying cause [is racial balance] and the final answer do[es] not lie with the Board of Education, the school district is in no way thereby relieved of its responsibility to take whatever reasonable and practicable steps are available to it to eliminate, or at least mitigate, conditions which have an adverse effect upon its pupils.³⁹

As to the three plans before him, the two Wolff proposals and the "Sixth Grade Plan", the Commissioner said all three appeared educationally sound and practicable and left it to the Board to determine which plan was best suited to

³⁹ Booker, et.al. v. Board of Education of the City of Plainfield, No. C-424, N.J. Commissioner of Education, June 1963.

the needs of Plainfield. Implementation was ordered by September 1963. (See Table VII, p. 100-A).

One day later the five-man Board adopted the "Sixth Grade Plan", although their attitudes toward compliance differed. Board president Friebely said he felt the Board had a "moral obligation to adopt some plan, but now we have a legal obligation."⁴⁰ He painfully noted that community consensus "is not in favor of a change at all." In view of that, Friebely continued, "the 'Sixth Grade Plan' will meet with more approval than the others."⁴¹ Board member David C. Bomberger felt no moral obligation. "It is clear," he said before voting for the 'Sixth Grade Plan', "we must come to a decision and it is clear that the people of Plainfield have had little to do with it."⁴²

DEMONSTRATION FEVER

The "Sixth Grade Plan", considered by many whites a concession to the Negroes, was vehemently attacked by those it would supposedly benefit. Again external events impelled local Negro leaders into a more militant position. The summer of 1963 was marked by increasing racial tensions throughout the country. In Elizabeth, across the county, Negro civil rights advocates had demonstrated, battled police, lain in

⁴⁰Plainfield Courier-News, June 27, 1963.

⁴¹Newark Evening News, June 28, 1963.

⁴²Plainfield Courier-News, June 27, 1963.

TABLE VII

RACIAL COMPOSITION IN THE PLAINFIELD PUBLIC
ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS AFTER IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
"SIXTH GRADE PLAN"

<u>School</u>	<u>Percentage of Negro, April 1963</u>	<u>Percentage of Negro, October 1963 (after adoption of "Sixth Grade Plan")</u>
Washington	96.2%	36.6%
Emerson	72.1%	76.4%
Stillman	67.6%	65.2%
Bryant	65.9%	67.1%
Clinton	58.9%	66.1%
Jefferson	44.9%	52.1%
Barlow	30.8%	40.8%
Woodland	18.8%	39.8%
Evergreen	8.8%	26.5%
Cedarbrook	3.8%	17.7%
Cook	0.8%	23.4%
Lincoln	63.0%	63.3%

In the "Sixth Grade Plan" the Washington School, formerly a 96.2% Negro elementary school, has been converted into a Sixth Grade School for the entire public school system. Pupils living within the Washington Zone were dispersed to the six schools which prior to implementation of the plan had a racial composition of less than 50%. The percentage of Negroes in the remaining schools rose, because there are a higher proportion of non-whites in the lower grades. The following is the distribution of Washington district pupils, grades K through 5.

Barlow	- K, 15; first, 3; second, 9; third, 2; fourth, 18; fifth, 20.
Cedarbrook	- K, 20; first, 41; second, 28; third, 26; fourth, 4; fifth, 2.
Cook	- K, 20; first, 28; second, 15; third, 23; fourth, 11; fifth, 25.
Evergreen	- K, 50; first, 32; second, none; third, 20; fourth, 14; fifth, 3.
Jefferson	- K, none; first, 32; second, none; third, 17; fourth, 3; fifth, 3.
Woodland	- K, 25; first, 17; second, 5; third, 17; fourth, 3; fifth, 15.

front of cement trucks and been arrested in order to protest job discrimination in building trades unions. The fever of public demonstrations eventually worked its spell upon the hitherto "timid" Negro in Plainfield. At a civil rights rally in late August 1963, Rev. Allen announced the local NAACP would picket and "disrupt the entire educational system" to show its disapproval of the "patronizing" 'Sixth Grade Plan'.⁴³ The picketing started at the Administrative Building of the Board of Education, on succeeding nights, shifted to the homes of Board members and then to Mayor Robert C. Meddow's home. The number of chanting pickets ranged between 20 and 45.

Several days later Superintendent of Schools Podesta announced he had decided to leave his post in Plainfield for a similar one in Vineland, N.J. Most observers inferred that Podesta was leaving because of private differences with the Board on the integration problem. His announcement further unsettled an already unsettled situation.

Picketing resumed after Labor Day. The first target was a meeting of the Common Council at which Negro demonstrators expressed their displeasure with the "Sixth Grade Plan". On the first day of school, Negro parents staged a sit-in at the Washington School. Sit-ins at Washington and picketing there were resumed the following days. The pickets next

⁴³Ibid., August 20, 1963.

returned to the homes of Board members and the sit-in parents moved to Emerson School. The number of pickets reached as high as 80. The NAACP demonstration committee in late September decided to concentrate on Thursday "Shopping Night" demonstrations in the Front Street business district. These marches and two others on City Hall continued, amid public derision, until mid-December. The largest protest of Plainfield residents contained 145 demonstrators - the week after a smoke bomb had been hurled into the line of march. The Courier-News advised the Negro marchers they were learning "How to Lose Friends."⁴⁴

The continual application of pressure appeared to have borne first fruit when, in early December, Mayor Meddox appointed the first Negro to the Board of Education. Named to the post was Dr. Richard F. Neblett, who had been serving as chairman of the city's Traffic and Parking Commission. A 5-year resident of Plainfield, the Ph.D. chemist was carefully selected by the Republican administration.⁴⁵ From the beginning, several NAACP officials were wary. One commented that Neblett was not regarded as a militant Negro.⁴⁶ Another was disappointed that a person more conversant with local Negro affairs had not been picked.⁴⁷ All agreed on Neblett's

⁴⁴Ibid., editorial, October 28, 1963.

⁴⁵Interview with Plainfield Mayor Robert C. Meddox, March 10, 1964.

⁴⁶Miller Interview.

⁴⁷Allen Interview.

high intelligence and capability. The militants' worst fears were fulfilled when Dr. Neblett announced, in February 1964, he supported the Board of Education's stand on the "Sixth Grade Plan". Neblett also revealed that his views on Board policy were known at the time of his appointment.⁴⁸

While buses transported Plainfield school children and the percentage of Negroes in the city elementary schools had risen to at least 40 per cent, an appeal was carried by the 28 Negro parents to the State Board of Education. No one associated with appeal had much hope for its success, because the State Board had not lent its support to the rulings of Commissioner Rsubinger, but had also refused to overrule them.⁴⁹

The brief for the 28 parents, the appellents, argued the resulting percentages after the adoption of the "Sixth Grade Plan", did not eliminate racial imbalance in the whole system and that the Commissioner was remiss in not ordering the reduction in racially imbalanced schools other than Washington. The amicus curiae brief supplied by the Plainfield Council for Educational Progress, an interracial group formed to combat the "Sixth Grade Plan", stated the Commissioner had a legal obligation to achieve racial balance in the schools and supported Wolff's "fulcrum percentage" system.

⁴⁸Newark Evening News, February 24, 1964.

⁴⁹U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, loc. cit., 61; Mutnick Interview.

In reply, the State Board posed for itself the question: What is de facto segregation in the invidious sense? It only partially answered it. The board stated the Commissioner had not previously ruled all imbalance (in excess of 50 per cent Negro) constitutes a deprivation of equal educational opportunity, as the amicus curiae had alleged. To maintain such, the Board continued, is "not tenable. We further hold that there is no fine line which can be drawn in terms of numbers, between 50 and 90 per cent, and that each case must be judged upon its own facts."⁵⁰

The NAACP has since indicated it plans to carry the appeal to the Appellate Division of the State Superior Court. It must decide whether to ask for a determination of mathematical racial imbalance in a single school or for an opinion on whether it is incumbent upon the Board of Education to achieve racial balance in a school system.

Another noteworthy reaction to the implementation of the "Sixth Grade Plan" has emanated from the Cook School area. Before September 1962, the Cook School had no Negroes in its student body. As of September 1963, non-whites comprised about 23 per cent. A petition circulated in the Netherwood area surrounding Cook School urged the Board to return to

⁵⁰ Decision of the State Board of Education, Charles B. Booker, et.al., Appellants, v. The Board of Education of the City of Plainfield, Union County, Respondent, February 5, 1964.

"limited open enrollment." It has collected approximately 700 signatures.

A suit from Englewood, covering a racial imbalance controversy similar to Plainfield's, is currently being litigated in the Federal Courts. The decision in that case could have a crucial effect on Plainfield and the hundreds of other communities faced with the same problem.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESPONSE AND RESPONSIBILITY

CHAPTER FIVE

"... until we were suddenly awakened by the noise generated by the school problem..."¹

The demonstrations, petitions and racial tension which had marked the school controversy had awakened not only the Plainfield Negro but the Plainfield white too. Race relations in Plainfield was no longer a small problem; now it urgently demanded attention. The realities of "For Sale" signs prompted action from those who valued Plainfield "as a nice place to live", but were willing to make practical accommodations with the new forces.

What had the pickets and "Shopping Night" marchers accomplished? Their effect had been double-edged. By the admission of a prominent Republican politician, the demonstrations had impressed the white community of the Negro's courage and determination.² The publicity which attended the protests magnified their impact, but the marches also raised the specter of residential instability. The tensions raised by the Negro activists further unsettled an already uneasy white community. Realtors reported an increase in calls from willing-to-sell white homeowners. White-to-white

¹Excerpted from the Report of the Mayor's Special Committee on High-Rise Apartments, Plainfield, N.J. as printed in the Plainfield Courier-News, February 8, 1964.

²Interview with Harold N. Scherer, Jr., March 7, 1964. (This will hereafter be cited as Scherer Interview).

real estate transactions virtually ceased. Many thought the Negroes were asking for "too much" and that their demonstrations were engendering more white hostility than admiration. Especially, the "Shopping Night" marches came under attack. The NAACP rationale for these was two-fold: a Front Street procession provided maximum exposure; second, the merchants "might ... re-evaluate their position" on the school issue, if the marches were to hurt retail business.³ This second point proved to have little validity, because the tie between the businessmen and the school issue was not related directly enough to have achieved a response favoring the Negro cause.

With the school issue stalled in the courts, Plainfield's Negro leadership has re-directed its complaints to the city's political body, the Common Council. Chanting pickets appeared at Council meetings throughout last fall. They elicited from the Republican majority opinions upon the "Sixth Grade Plan", the object of the demonstrators' protests. The Negroes also became embroiled with the Council in feuds about police photographing of marchers and NAACP importation of marchers from out of town.

Usually, personal reactions from the GOP councilmen are difficult to obtain because differences of opinion ordinarily are settled behind closed doors in a party caucus.

³Interview with Rev. Frank W. Allen, February 2, 1964.
(This will hereafter be cited as Allen Interview.)

Some of the unexpected confrontations of last fall revealed the divisions within the party between the strong conservatives, middle-of-the-roaders and small segment of liberals. Councilmen C. Brice de Ganahl and George T. Norton have displayed at times a marked impatience both with Negroes on the Council and with the NAACP. Norton and Councilman Everett Lattimore, a Negro, have engaged in vicious exchanges in the past, one of which prompted Lattimore to stalk out of the Council chambers. Norton, in commenting upon the Fall 1963 protest demonstrations, termed them "out of place" and complained they had made it impossible to convince competent persons to serve the city.⁴

De Ganahl worked extremely hard in the 1963 campaign to have Lattimore defeated in his bid for re-election in the First Ward. He was the only councilman to object publicly to the importation of out-of-city residents for a Front Street march. The councilman stated he knew "our local citizens ... deplore the demonstrations."⁵ When Negroes objected to police photographing of marchers, it was de Ganahl again who defended the law enforcers' prerogative.

Harold N. Scherer, Jr. of the Second Ward has emerged on the Council as the party's policy channel for racial issues. He has directed his efforts to "build understanding between

⁴Plainfield Courier-News, September 4, 1963.

⁵Ibid., November 1, 1963.

people."⁶ His public position is that of a moderate on racial issues. Scherer introduced the ordinance in August 1963 creating the Human Relations Commission.

Councilman-at-Large Stephen D. Durino is the sole GOP member who has supported Negro goals. He criticized the Board of Education after it had adopted the "Sixth Grade Plan" because it "didn't do enough". He lambasted the Common Council for its failure to provide leadership on racial problems. "As long as we put our heads in the sand, and hide," Durino told the Council, "we're going to be in trouble".⁷

The trend of thought appears to be leading the party along the path charted by Scherer and the moderates. If these men are sincere in their desire to develop a creative dialogue between whites and Negroes, their efforts will benefit the city. A recourse to the cynical shams of old or a surrender to the arch-conservative wing of the party would prove disastrous in this era of the "Awakening Negro". The Republicans' basic conservatism, however, prevents them from favoring an unorthodox course of action. A resolution, offered by Lettimore, to support the pending state fair housing bill, was defeated in August 1963 by the Republicans. This bill, Lettimore maintained, would help relieve the pressure of the Negro housing demand on Plainfield and assist

⁶Ibid., September 4, 1963.

⁷Ibid.

in opening new integrated neighborhoods in surrounding communities.

Negro complaints about the inactivity of the Substandard Housing Committee have finally struck a responsive chord on the Council. A new awareness by whites of the dangers of blight and deterioration to the city's welfare has prompted this new common effort. The Council moved in 1963 to strengthen the staff of the Building Inspector - Public Officer and has even hired a Negro as an assistant.

The NAACP and other groups are beginning to move against rental discrimination in the city. The garden apartments and high-rise apartments in Plainfield long excluded Negroes. An NAACP official recently informed the Common Council "the situation is almost impossible for a Negro family with children" to rent a decent apartment in Plainfield.⁸

In private housing, Negroes have long pointed to the realtor as the main bogeyman for his alleged inflating of prices, and block-busting and runaround tactics. The Board of Realtors of the Plainfield Area made a bid for community cooperation when it publicly stated: "... unwarranted alarm and panic and not the presence of a particular family has been the cause of depreciated property values."⁹

⁸Ibid., August 21, 1963.

⁹Letter by Arthur Lavenher, President of The Board of Realtors of the Plainfield Area, as printed in Plainfield Courier-News, October 18, 1963.

The Negro leaders have also shifted some of their attention to employment discrimination. The NAACP has obtained an open apprentice program at Art Color in Dunellen and has conducted surveys of the practices of local banks. During the demonstrations last summer, NAACP leaders marched through two downtown department stores to "survey" employment practices there. The local branch plans to launch its next campaign against local retail merchants' discriminatory hiring. The NAACP currently seeks conferences with local employers to question them about their hiring practices. If the merchants' response proves unsatisfactory, the NAACP plans to organize economic boycotts against those employers who refuse to cooperate.¹⁰

Garment manufacturers in Plainfield notoriously have failed to hire Negro help, mainly because of fear their work force would quit in disapproval. A high degree of job mobility in the industry, caused by a white labor shortage, has made this threat meaningful to employers. One employer in the First Ward bucked the odds and hired Negroes. His dramatic gamble has paid off handsomely, and now approximately one-third of his shop is Negro.¹¹

A tutoring program to combat school dropouts, sponsored by the interracial Plainfield Area Committee for Human Rela-

¹⁰Allen Interview.

¹¹Telephone Interview with Richard Kosten, organizer for the Plainfield I.L.C.W.U., March 17, 1964.

tions and the Negro service group, Frontiers International, was formed in October 1963. Officially supported by the Board of Education, which has supplied textbooks, the project has a large staff of tutors working with elementary and junior high school students, mostly Negro. Cooperation from the white community has been good. Some of the tutors are white and a high school age group from Temple Shalom provides babysitting service.

Major recent developments in Plainfield race relations were the formation in 1963 of two integrated neighborhood associations - the Hillside Terrace Neighborhood Association and the American Way Association. Comprising the Second Ward area between Watchung Avenue and East Seventh Street from Webster Place to Woodland Avenue, the Hillside Terrace group was formed to counteract panic selling after the neighborhood had become about 20 per cent Negro. The 135-member association sponsors interracial socials and discussion groups to educate residents. It reports that selling of houses by white homeowners has not stopped but has significantly decelerated.

The group's most pressing problem is to find white families to replace departing whites and to induce realtors to show these houses to prospective white homeowners.¹²

The American Way Association, whose problems and aims are

¹²Letter from Mr. and Mrs. David Nelven, February 17, 1964.

similar, is composed of 48 residents of West Fifth and West Sixth Streets between Grant and Clinton Avenues in the far West End.

Official reaction to the formation of the groups was favorable, but there is evidence it was based on belief they would stem the Negro influx. Most observers are pessimistic about the associations' future. They fear efforts to "stabilize" a neighborhood will backfire.

According to the city's Republican administration one of the most important accomplishments of the past year was the establishment of a Human Relations Commission.¹³ The purpose of this "blue-ribbon" group is to act as a mediating body in inter-group conflicts. Its sponsors hoped the Commission, by tangible acts, would convince the militant Negroes that the white leadership could be trusted. The H.R.C. is to be headed by a paid professional "Executive Secretary", but the permanent appointee has not taken office yet. In the hands of this Executive Secretary could lie the course of Plainfield racial relations.

The militant Negro leaders have been pessimistic about the Human Relations Commission from its inception. Two prominent Negro leaders, Charles E. Miller and Mrs. Alice

¹³Statement by Mayor Robert C. Maddox as printed in Plainfield Courier-News, January 2, 1964.

Stuart, turned down invitations to serve. Councilman Phillip V. Hammond, a Negro, reflected the Negro's wariness when he clumsily urged the creation of a deputy Executive Secretary, "because there is not a chance that a Negro will be hired as Executive Secretary."¹⁴ Negroes were afraid the Human Relations Commission "will be just one more place where grievances may be buried."¹⁵ They also feared the lay commission had been stacked against them and, to a degree, this had been true. Mayor Robert C. Maddox, a man constantly on guard against "starry-eyed liberals" purposely appointed people with a cross-section of views on racial matters. On his "blue ribbon commission" he aimed to appoint seven liberals, eight conservatives and 13 middle-of-the-roaders. Resignations and new appointments have altered the lineup.¹⁶ As expected, the liberal whites have provided direction for the Commission in the interim before the Executive Secretary is appointed.

In its short history the Human Relations Commission has demonstrated a potential to meet creatively some of the city's racial conflicts, but it has failed, so far, to gain the confidence of the activist Negro leadership.

The Commission has established a "pilot" Job Talent

¹⁴Plainfield Courier-News, August 29, 1963.

¹⁵Statement by Everett C. Lattimore, as printed in Plainfield Courier-News, August 29, 1963.

¹⁶Interview with Plainfield Mayor Robert C. Maddox, March 10, 1964. (This will hereafter cited as Maddox Interview).

Center, which serves as a middleman between the Negro high school graduates and industry in the Plainfield area. Amid massive publicity, several Negroes have been placed. The Commission has assisted in the investigation of rental discrimination complaints in the East End and alleged block-busting by realtors in the West End. It also mediated the clash between NAACP leaders and the Police Department over the police department's photographing of marchers.

The key factor in the effectiveness of the Human Relations Commission will be the personality and capability of the full-time Executive Secretary. His actions and attitude will determine whether the wary Negro activists will be disposed to bring their complaints to the Human Relations Commission rather than "take to the streets" once more.

THE SHAKY ALLIANCE

Since the election of Eugene Campbell in 1960, the Plainfield Democratic Party has had at least one Negro councilman. For the past three years, the Democrats have held four of the Council's 11 seats. Two of those are currently occupied by Negroes, who therefore represent half the party's official voice.

The importance of the Negro in the re-vitalization of the Plainfield Democratic Party is immense. The internal problems engendered by the shift of the Plainfield Negro

vote have been difficult too. Formerly, Plainfield Negroes were almost exclusively Republican. Events on the national scene switched the nation-wide Negro vote to the Democratic column in the 1930s, but the turnabout was much slower to occur on the local level in Plainfield. The feebleness of the local Democrat Party, boss rule of the state organization and local GOP patronization of Negro ward leaders, and - later in the mid 1950s - candidates, tended to keep the rank-and-file Negro vote Republican.

By 1960, however, new forces were at work. The state Democratic Party was burgeoning with success, its old machine finish had been painted over and its outlook emerged as more liberal. The Republican city government, especially during the term of former Mayor Richard Dyckman, seemed deaf to Negro causes such as the Berkeley Terrace incident. It was in 1960, the Negro contribution to Plainfield politics formally began.

The big break came in 1961 when Everett C. Lattimore, an outspoken, militant Negro capitalized on the Berkeley Terrace mess and won a 213-vote councilmanic victory. He managed to capture the bona fide Negro Republican vote in the middle class "Gilded Ghetto", along with that of white and Negro Democrats. Lattimore's behavior on the Common Council differed sharply from that of any previous Negro

member. He championed Negro causes, often to the embarrassment of his white Democratic colleagues who frequently were unaware of the issues or disagreed with Lattimore's viewpoint. Although four Democrats were seated, including the Negro Campbell, Lattimore sometimes found himself outvoted 10-1 on issues he had championed.

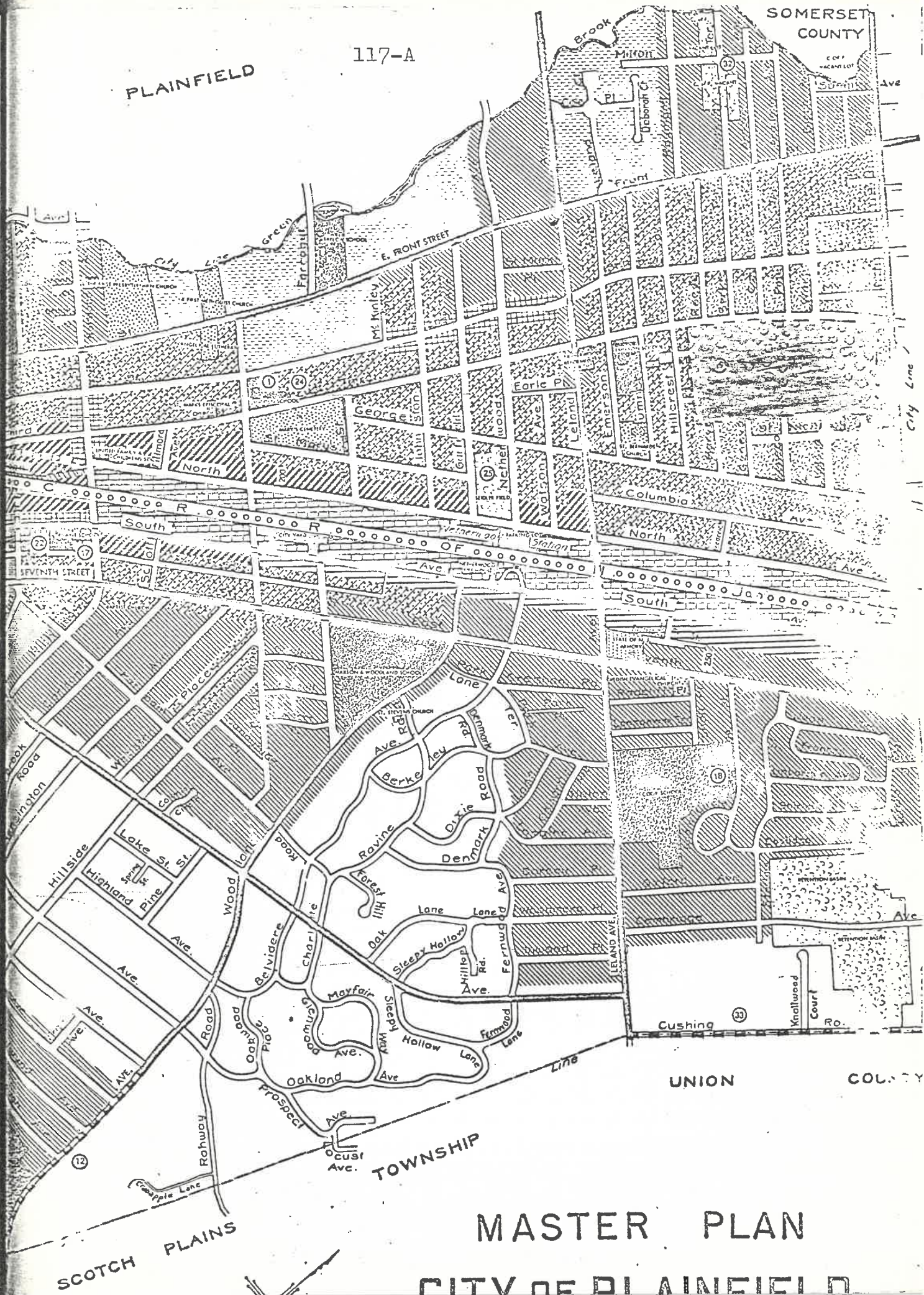
The most important of these issues was the disposition of the 34-acre Tract 19 in the far East End, located between East Third Street and St. Nicholas Boulevard. While controversy raged over land reservation near the Berkeley Terrace playground, only 500 yards away, a consultant to the Planning Board recommended Tract 19 also be reserved for park land and the "highest priority" be given to the acquisition and protection of it.¹⁷ Studies showed the First Ward to possess a below average amount of park acreage. The large vacant tract, most of which is owned by the city, had also been suggested by the Catholic Church as a site for a regional parochial high school. The response by Negro residents in the First Ward to both possibilities was sharply critical. A 300-name petition, presented to the Common Council, asked the tract be turned over for construction of single-family dwellings. Later, the church rescinded its request, but the city still had the park acreage under consideration.

¹⁷ Charles K. Agle, Capital Improvement Program for Planning Board of Plainfield, N.J., October 1960.

PLAINFIELD

117-A

SOMERSET COUNTY



MASTER PLAN

CITY OF PLAINFIELD

The proposal to place the reservation of the tract on the city's Official Map was brought before the Council in June 1962. (See portion of Official Map, p. 117-A). Orestes N. Cambrole, a First Ward Democrat, and Fourth Ward Democrats Robert A. MacConnell and Campbell voted with the 10-1 majority to amend the Official Map. Lattimore protested, claiming the park land reservation was merely a Republican gimmick to restrict an influx of Negro homeowners.

Feeling in the First Ward remained high on the issue. With the prodding of local party chairman Hugh Caldwell, Cambrole withdrew his backing for a Tract 19 park and campaigned in 1962 on a promise to secure the land for home-building. Councilman MacConnell was also won over. The increasing importance of the Negro vote had finally convinced the white Democrats they must become politically cognizant of their Negro constituents' needs.

In March 1963 a proposal to apply for a Green Acre grant for the development of the Tract 19 park elicited Lattimore's vigorous objections once more. In a report to the Council, he charged a 34-acre park was not needed and reminded the Council that the Recreation Commission had estimated a 5-acre park would be sufficient for the Ward. Lattimore said a large park in the far East End would result in a racially segregated facility, because of the high con-

centration of Negro residents in the area. Finally he blasted the park idea as simply a subterfuge for a Republican plot to limit home buying opportunities for Negroes in the racially integrated First Ward. He urged instead, as had the residents' petition, the allotment of a sizable portion of the tract for the construction of single-family dwellings.¹⁸ This time Lattimore lost, 7-4.

The first fruits of the Negroes' pressure tactics were borne in January 1964 when the Planning Board and Common Council agreed to surrender the 75-foot strips of land off the Raymond Avenue properties adjoining the Berkeley Terrace playground site. The city officials decided to drop plans for a Little League field there and use the remaining acreage for a "tot" park, because, they said, the pending Green Acres development on Tract 19 would satisfy the area's park needs.

It has been more than a year since the Council applied for Green Acres assistance for the Tract 19 park. Councilman Lattimore revealed that recently he had forwarded a copy of his Opposition to the Construction of Public^a Park on Tract 19 to the state agency in charge of disbursing Green Acres funds. He is confident the unusual delay is indicative of a forthcoming refusal.¹⁹

¹⁸Everett C. Lattimore, Opposition to the Construction of a Public Park on Tract 19, submitted to Plainfield Common Council, March 4, 1963.

¹⁹Telephone Interview with Everett C. Lattimore, March 30, 1964. (This will hereafter be cited as Lattimore Telephone Interview.)

The Wolff Report, issued in late June 1962, was the next racial issue to rock party unity. It followed close on the heels of the Tract 19 party split. Councilman Lattimore led the party's Negro element which favored the Wolff proposals. In fact, Lattimore was later to "take to the streets" to protest implementation of the "Sixth Grade Plan".

Shortly after the Wolff report was made public, the 1962 slate of Democratic candidates (excluding Fourth Ward Negro Phillip V. Hammond) publicly announced disapproval of "the mass shifting of the city's grammar school population" as proposed by Wolff. These Democrats urged the city concentrate instead on breaking the segregated housing patterns and to investigate Lattimore's plans for housing rehabilitation and/or renewal with federal funds.

Republicans castigated the Democrats for "throwing education into the field of politics" and for their "deplorable" use of the "bait of public housing as the price for maintaining our fine school system."²⁰ Although the whites and Negroes within the Democratic Party could not agree on how to solve racial imbalance in public schools, later party statements effected a compromise between both groups. Singling out the Board of Education, they criticized it for inaction and condemned the inferior education it

²⁰Statement by Councilmen Robert C. Maddox and Henry T. Reumer, as printed in Plainfield Courier-News, July 10, 1962.

offered in several schools. In order to prevent an internal bolt the Democrats have engaged in frank discussion among themselves and have adopted a compromise scapegoat approach. Their platform opposes the "Sixth Grade Plan" and urges the Board of Education be made an elective, rather than an appointive, office. The Democrats maintain an elective Board would be "more in tune with the people."²¹

If the coalition between the labor element and disaffected liberal whites and Negroes can be maintained, the party's chances for gaining a Common Council majority are not nearly as obscure as they once were. Much depends, of course, on the calibre of candidates the party offers. The current political situation in the Third Ward presents a possible breakthrough opportunity for the Democrats. Their councilmanic candidate there, Joseph McCertney, lost by 16 votes in 1961 and 57 votes in 1963.

The most important factor, other than maintenance of the coalition, is registration and conversion of the Negro vote. The two victories of Everett Lattimore in the First Ward illustrate the potential of a strong Democratic Negro turnout. The Republicans nominally still have a strong hold on the Ward, but they have been unable to elect a councilman since 1958. In the Ward there are 1510 registered

²¹Statement by Councilman Phillip V. Hammond, as printed in Plainfield Courier-News, October 18, 1963.

Republicans and 542 registered Democrats. Negroes comprise 1415 of the Ward's 4403 voters or 32 per cent. Of Negroes with party affiliation, the Republicans outnumber Democrats by more than two to one, 522-238. Forty-six per cent of the Ward's Negro voters are independents. The Democratic Negro vote in the Ward, therefore, accounts for only five per cent of the total.²²

Lettimore's campaign appealed to the Negroes. He declared: "The local Republican Party has clearly rejected the role of protector of the public interest. They are merely guardians of the crumbling status quo."²³ Lettimore won re-election by sweeping the Negro districts (2nd, 75 per cent; 5th, 79 per cent; 7th 75 per cent). He proved in the First Ward, what is also true in the Fourth, that a candidate popular with Negroes can pay no regard to party labels - Republican, Democrat or Independent - and draw the Negroes to the polls solidly behind him.

The Democratic Party has worked recently to register Negro voters, especially in the Fourth Ward, but has been only moderately successful. Although the Democrats have held both council seats in the Fourth Ward for several years, the Ward's percentage of the total vote and therefore its effect on the vital Councilman-at-Large and mayoralty elections has

²²Compiled from statistics made available, Lettimore Telephone Interview.

²³Plainfield's Changing Times, October 5, 1963.

been very small. In the past few years it has accounted for between 14 and 16 per cent of the vote. On the other hand, the highly-Republican Second Ward (at least three to one) has delivered between 33 and 41 per cent of the total.

The current city-wide voting patterns give the Republicans approximately 56 per cent of the vote. In political circles that margin is still considered "safe". If the Negro registration were to increase markedly, the Democrats could then pull within reach of the GOP's plurality and convert all city elections into question mark contests.

The Democratic Party's white leaders will be faced with difficult decisions in the next few years. They will have to choose between the old-time type of candidate like MacConnell, who adds little to the Council and seems to back Negro causes without conviction, and Negroes and whites who are more "liberal" than Plainfield "Democrat". Negro dissatisfaction with MacConnell in the 1963 campaign indicates resolution of this question will soon be thrust upon the Democrats. A turn toward the "liberals" might re-shape the party in a new progressive image "tainted" with heavy Negro support. The present fuzzy image of incompetence will not pose a serious threat to the Republicans. One surety exists: no matter which decision is made the contribution of the Negro to the Democratic Party will increase.

THE COMPLEXITIES OF NEGRO LEADERSHIP

The failure of the NAACP to mass consistently large turnouts for their protests (they fluctuated between 13 and 200) vitiated their impact more on the uncommitted Negro than on the indifferent white.

The excitement of the school issue, the re-assurance of the Wolff Report and the NAACP's foremost role proved a boon to the organization's membership rolls. Rev. Allen estimated membership increased three-fold, to approximately 900. Interwoven between the wider support and more militant posture is the disconcerting reality that the NAACP's tactics have not culminated in a mass movement among Plainfield Negroes. Never has the Plainfield Negro community gathered for any mass rally or demonstrated any other affirmative proof of widespread solidarity on any all-city racial issue. Certainly the integration row has ignited interest only in a portion of the Negro community. Some of the poor response has been laid to the issue. Much of this lack of enthusiasm can be seen in two types of Negro; the satisfied homeowner and the diffident Southern in-migrant. According to Rev. Allen, the bulk of the NAACP's membership comes from the "disadvantaged". He says as a rule the greater a Plainfield Negro's education the more likely is he to be self-satisfied and therefore unmotivated toward the integration movement.²⁴ The exceptions to this

²⁴Allen Interview.

rule, however, have provided the organization with its most able leaders and advisors. A tendency exists among some upper income Negroes who either send their children to well integrated schools, or, for instance, to the Emerson School, to feel divorced from all integration issues. Because these Negroes have succeeded materially, they have concluded that if anyone tries hard enough he can succeed. This individualistic attitude cannot easily be reconciled with the thrust of NAACP activity.

Among the non-white newcomers to the North, there exists a natural satisfaction with their relatively improved environment. These people, many of whom are poorly educated, find social integration a difficult concept to conceive.

THE MINISTRY AND REV. ALLEN

The failure of the city's Negro ministry to respond wholeheartedly to the new demands for militancy is a primary reason for the limited appeal of NAACP activity in Plainfield. Although Rev. Allen claims he has obtained a great deal of cooperation from the Plainfield Negro ministry, of which he is a member, the degree of the ministerial involvement has not been impressive. In fact some Negroes lay the failure of the NAACP itself to emerge as a more widely-accepted spokesman to the ministers' unwillingness to participate more in its efforts and to Allen's inability to stir them. The effectiveness of the NAACP vis-a-vis the white community has

been hampered by the leading ministers' absence, because "whites would rather deal with anything but a Negro minister."²⁵

The diversity of Plainfield's Negroes makes it mandatory that the leadership be able to speak to all the people. Many maintain Allen has been incapable of doing this. This ability might reside with some of the more entrenched ministers, who have long been the Negro's guide and counsel. But the most highly respected and best-known of the Negro ministry are elderly men and do not feel compelled to stress Rev. Allen's social integration. In fact, several white clergymen in the city have been more active in integration demonstrations and rallies than have some of the Negro ministers.

Petty jealousies and rancorous name-calling within the ministerial group, has nearly prevented it, as a unit, to take a forceful stand on the big issues. Yet, there persists a near-Messianic belief among the militants that a youthful, vigorous clergyman will appear. Clothed in the peculiar social and economic immunity accorded "selfless" ministers, he will be able to rally all Negroes by bridging the gap of diversity. So far, no one has acknowledged any sign of his coming.

Within the framework of the NAACP, the ministers have provided a restraining, and in some cases an obstructive, force. Realizing their incompatibility with the NAACP, Everett C. Lattimore, a Negro political leader and ordained minister,

²⁵ Interview with Everett C. Lattimore, October 15, 1963.

last summer welded together the Plainfield Ministerial Fellowship. From this group, he envisioned a united ministry, embracing militancy and spreading its gospel to their congregations. The Rev. O. David Slacum, pastor of the Mt. Zion A.M.E. Church and a newcomer to Plainfield, was elected president as a compromise between the conservative old-guard and the vocal associate pastors like Lattimore and Allen. The Ministerial Fellowship staged a silent march to City Hall in August 1963 and tacked a "Statement of Grievances" on the door. The tone of the "Statement", a good deal stronger than one might expect from the group, indicated the large part Lattimore played in obtaining its approval. The "Statement" blasted the local power structure for its broken promises and unresponsive attitude. It condemned the "Sixth Grade Plan", urged establishment of system-wide racial balance in the schools, and demanded the hiring of more Negroes in municipal jobs. It also urged the appointment of Negroes to the city's policy-making boards, such as the Planning Board, Recreation Commission, Board of Health, the Parking Authority and the Board of Education. (This was prior to Mr. Nebllett's selection). In housing, it beseeched the Common Council to turn over Tract 19 to private ownership for development into a residential area, asked the Berkeley Terrace playground site be given up for residential use and land taken from Raymond Avenue property-

owners be returned. (The Raymond Avenue land has since been returned). The "Statement" also criticized the practices of realtors and lending institutions "whose actions have greatly contributed to the segregated patterns of housing..." The ministerial fellowship further demanded the elimination of the notorious slum area on Cottage Place.²⁶

A third Negro organization, a fledgling branch of the Congress of Racial Equality, might siphon some of the more militant young Negroes if NAACP progress falls short of their expectations. CORE, currently headed by Seymour Van Blake, has already been active in combatting rental discrimination and in opposing the "Sixth Grade Plan". The future of this group rests on the pitfalls encountered by the NAACP. If white attitudes in Plainfield stiffen toward Negro demands, (contrary to current indications) and the NAACP proves too fragmented to mass convincing protests and pressure, CORE might well inherit much of the NAACP energy. At present, the future of CORE as an independent entity is not secure.

Initially, Rev. Allen was the driving force in the NAACP's struggle against the "white power structure", overcoming all internal opposition. But as the NAACP's involvement deepened and its efforts increased in legal complexity,

²⁶ Plainfield Ministerial Fellowship, Statement of Grievances, August 11, 1963.

Allen began to lose his grip on the steering apparatus. Soon, his hands were tied by the legal maneuvers and the lawyers had to exert a larger influence in the decision-making process. Underlying the broadening scope of the branch's activity, there has been a concomitant uneasiness among Negroes as to the ultimate importance of racial balance as an end in itself. This essential unsureness about the "rightness" of their cause has served to aggravate the division of Negro sentiment and to weaken Allen's appeal as a symbol. In addition, the Reverend's health suffered a setback during the winter of 1963 and he was advised to take a 3-month leave of absence from his post. His substitute, Luther Roberts, is a competent man, milder and more tactful in approach.

When Rev. Allen returns to the presidency he will hear arguments against the relative worth of racial balance articulated more fearlessly than before. The debate will intensify, while Plainfield Negroes impatiently wait for the tortuous processes of the appellate courts to culminate in a decision.

CONCLUSION

I do not think that integration is the answer to the problem. I am personally convinced the answer cannot be found without it.¹

The question of racial imbalance in the public schools is still unresolved. The issues are becoming clearer, however, as all involved become more realistic. Evidently there is a good deal of validity in Dr. Wolff's statement above. The gut problem is how much integration can suburban Plainfield afford, given the apparent white residential volatility.

If the State and/or Federal Courts rule in favor of the "Sixth Grade Plan", the Negro leaders will, of necessity, shift their concern to less grand, but still important goals. Among them are human relations training for teachers, more intensive remedial teaching for under-achieving Negro youngsters, elimination of avoidable stigmas imposed on bussed Negro pupils and programs to improve the school-home environment.

The school crisis has awakened many Plainfield whites to the educational needs of the Negro. Limited by their deeply-imbedded fear of wholesale integration, as exemplified in the Wolff plans, these whites would rather appease than integrate. They would now be willing to pay for enriched education in the predominantly Negro schools - provided the neighborhood school system be re-instituted. Continued Negro

¹Comment by Dr. Max Wolff, Minutes of the Board of Education Lay Advisory Committee, June 20, 1962, 4.

pressure should result in the achievement of the "same deal" under the "Sixth Grade Plans". Backed by the Commissioner of Education's ruling against extreme Washington School racial imbalance, the Negroes will not be willing to return to the old "de facto segregated" situation. If the Negroes can gain other educational concessions, their dislike for the "Sixth Grade Plan", although it does create hardships, will be ameliorated.

If the Courts were to rule the entire Plainfield school system must be racially-balanced (less likely than a denial of such), this writer sees practical spot rezoning as the only possible way to avoid a white selling panic and wholesale abandonment of the public school system. Wolff's Sister-School Plan was a good plan for achieving racial balance, but its potentially explosive effect on the Cedarbrook, Evergreen and Cook neighborhoods weighed heavily against it. Those Negroes that are so determined to "integrate the schools" are operating in an unrealistic vacuum. Some really care little if there is a white exodus; some do care. Both must realize that over-zealous attempts to achieve mathematical percentages, while sight is lost of valid educational goals, can bring contradictory results. There can be no integration without whites.

One very hopeful possibility is the construction of

a new high school and conversion of the old structure into a central elementary school, drawing from the heavily Negro Stillman and Washington districts and white Cedarbrook and Evergreen zones. By wisely zoning the school north-south, the Board of Education could achieve a satisfactory racial composition there. The main drawback is that the new high school will not be ready for at least three years.

The growing complexity of Plainfield's problems - racial strife, a white exodus, highway isolation, industrial mobility, housing deterioration and business district decay - would militate that well-paid, competent officials be working full-time to solve them. This has not been the case in Plainfield. The traditional part-time Mayor, unpaid-Council system is still in operation. In response to the city's needs, the elected representatives have delegated a great deal of policy-making authority to an increasing number of paid specialists (e.g., Industrial Director, Executive Secretary of the Human Relations Commission) and appointive committees. Several attempts to achieve a centralization of administration through the adoption of a City-Manager form of government have failed. The tradition of Old Suburban Plainfield survived each assault. The present form of government is best suited for a small homogeneous community of the type Plainfield once was. The city needs better-

coordinated administration. Inherently, the weak mayor form cannot provide it.

The city is seeking a blend of income levels in order to counteract the in-migration of low-income persons. This is the purpose of its luxury high-rise apartment plans. Nevertheless, medium and lower-income Negroes will still be attracted to Plainfield even if the prime neighborhoods are opened to the upper-income non-white. The large, deteriorating stock of old houses within or adjacent to Negro buying areas will be added to the Negro market. Plainfield officials have begun a crackdown on illegal overoccupancies in the homes and have decided to guard against mass conversion of these houses into multiple-unit dwellings. Of great assistance to all Plainfielders would be the breaking of Jim Crow housing barriers, without white flight, in Plainfield south of Seventh Street and especially in surrounding municipalities. A comprehensive state fair housing law might be helpful.

Attitudes of the combatants are most important when two social forces come into conflict. There are many assumptions, myths and habits of the past which often must be discarded if both groups are to establish a creative and beneficial dialogue between them.

The Negro leaders must re-examine their suspicion of

white motives, acquired from years of white indifference, bigotry and cynicism. The Awakening, however, has evoked a new white consciousness of the Negro and his needs. It has also convinced many whites of the Negro's determination and of the importance of mediating racial disputes for the good and reputation of the city. It is the Negro leadership's responsibility to re-evaluate their pervasive distrust of white officials and give the whites' new public policy a fair hearing.

White leaders, on the other hand, must be even more introspective. They must first resist the criticism of the bigot and the arch-conservative. Then they must finally realize that the modern Negro can no longer be hoodwinked and his problems swept under the rug. It will not pay to resort to the blindness or cynical shams of the past. They must assure the machinery, established (e.g., the Human Relations Commission) to mediate racial disputes, will act sincerely and accommodate the Negro when practical. If the Human Relations Commission can evoke trust from Negroes, they will bring their protests there rather than take them "to the streets".

Furthermore, all citizens, white and Negro must devote their energy to re-affirming Plainfield's worth. A new library, a civic center, Madison-Park, a new high school,

physical improvement of the business district and better highway connections could re-vitalize Plainfield in the eyes of all its citizens. This demands a wide, new comprehension of Plainfield as an integral six-mile square city, rather than a congery of fragmented, self-interested, secure ethnic and racial neighborhoods.

Plainfield has much to offer its citizens now. Potentially, it has a great deal more. But first White America must realize it can no longer afford to run.

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U.S. Bureau of the Census. U.S. Census of Population: 1960. Vol. I, Characteristics of the Population, Part 32, New Jersey. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1962.

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U.S. Bureau of the Census. U.S. Census of Population and Housing: 1960. Census Tracts. Final Report PHC(1)-91. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1961. Middlesex County Tract.

This census report provided me with a statistical comparison between Plainfield and New Brunswick non-white populations.

U.S. Bureau of the Census. U.S. Census of Population and Housing: 1960. Census Tracts. Final Report PHC(1)-105. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1962.

The Newark S.M.S.A. Census, a late find in my research, enabled me to break down Plainfield into Negro neighborhoods based on statistical tracts. This data was extremely valuable. I was able to compare Plainfield Negroes to those in the entire Newark S.M.S.A. and in my showcase cities, East Orange and Montclair.

U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. 1963 Report of U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. Washington, D.C. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1963.

The Civil Rights Commission Report gave me some insights on urban Negro out-migration, the importance of Booker v. Board of Education and the relationships between Governor Hughes, Commissioner Reubinger and the Board of Education. The reliability of this source is good.

2. State

New Jersey State Board of Education. Amicus Curiae Brief for Plainfield, N.J. Council for Educational Progress. Chas. B. Booker, et.al. Appellants vs. The Board of Education of City of Plainfield, N.J., Respondent. November 15, 1963. (mimeographed)

The amicus curiae brief refined the issues of racial imbalance in the public school system as a whole.

New Jersey State Board of Education. Decision of the State Board of Education, Chas. B. Booker, et.al., Appellants, vs. The Board of Education of the City of Plainfield, Union County, Respondent. February 5, 1964. (mimeographed)

The decision of the State Board of Education demonstrated the Board refused to make a blanket ruling on what constituted invidious de facto segregation short of a 95 per cent Negro school. It also left the issue of system-wide racial balance unanswered.

N.J. State Division on Civil Rights. These Are Your Rights. A Guide to New Jersey's Law Against Discrimination. Trenton, N.J., 1964.

Office of New Jersey State Commissioner of Education. Decision of Commissioner of Education: Chas. B. Booker et.al., Petitioner, vs. The Board of Education of the City of Plainfield, Union County, Respondent. June 26, 1963. (mimeographed)

This is an historic decision, because it states the Plainfield Board of Education does have the responsibility to relieve extreme racial imbalance in a single school, if it is practi-

cable for the school system to do so. In this case the Commissioner ruled such action was practicable.

Office of New Jersey State Commissioner of Education. Petitioner's Brief: Ches. B. Booker, et.al. Petitioner vs. Board of Education of the City of Plainfield, N.J., Respondent. September 4, 1962. (mimeographed)

3. Municipal

Lattimore, Everett C., First Ward Councilman, City of Plainfield, N.J. Opposition to the Construction of a Public Park on Tract 19. March 4, 1963. (mimeographed)

Lattimore's one-sided political tract deriding the Council's Tract 19 park plans starkly reveals Negro distrust for white Republican political motives. In that regard, The Opposition is a valuable piece. As I indicated in Chapter Five, the importance of this tract is as yet undetermined.

Plainfield, N.J. Board of Education Lay Advisory Committee. Minutes of the Plainfield Board of Education Lay Advisory Committee. December 27, 1961 through June 27, 1962. (mimeographed)

This is probably the most valuable primary source, other than interviews, in this thesis. These minutes have never been made public and, in fact, were rather difficult to procure for my research purposes. Many of the quotations I have used from them are pungent and direct. Better than anything I have found, they express a frankness about the basic hopes of the Negro and the basic anxieties of the white on the school issue and the Negro influx.

Plainfield, N.J. Board of Education. Proposed Elementary School Enrollment Policy. July 17, 1962. (mimeographed)

In this short piece the Board blandly explained its Optional Pupil Enrollment Policy.

Plainfield, N.J. Board of Education. Report of the Educational Facilities Advisory Committee. Fall 1962. (mimeographed)

This committee recommended the construction of a new high school and the conversion of a portion of the present high school into a central elementary school.

Plainfield, N.J. Board of Education. Report of the Plainfield Board of Education. July 27, 1962. (mimeographed)

The Board here gave a very detailed refutation of the Wolff Report.

Plainfield, N.J. Board of Health. Annual Reports of the Plainfield Board of Health, 1946-1963.

A compilation ^{which} indicated the rapid increase of Negro births in the city and the shrinking in the difference between white and Negro totals.

Plainfield, N.J. Housing Authority. Housing Survey of Plainfield, N.J. submitted by Roy Wenzlick & Co., St. Louis, Mo. December 1951.

The Wenzlick Survey gave a short, but valuable, analysis of housing trends and conditions in Plainfield. I would regard it as a reliable source.

Plainfield, N.J. Housing Authority. Preliminary Plan - Redevelopment Project Area B-1. January 1954. (mimeographed)

In this preliminary plan the Housing Authority made a bold attempt to excite the public mind for wide-ranging public housing and development. The times were not right. The plan also provided factual material regarding blight of a decade ago in Negro neighborhoods.

Plainfield, N.J. Planning Board. Capital Improvement Program for Planning Board of Plainfield, N.J. submitted by Charles K. Agle, Consultant. October 1960. (mimeographed)

This memorandum provided the "expert opinion" on which the Common Council's plans for the reservation of Tract 19 was based.

Plainfield, N.J. Planning Board. Master Plan of the City of Plainfield, N.J. October 9, 1959. (mimeographed)

Plainfield, N.J. Planning Board. Resolution to Amend the Master Plan of the City of Plainfield, N.J. December 16, 1959. (mimeographed)

This resolution initiated the Berkeley Terrace squabble.

Podesta, Dr. Victor J., Superintendent of Schools, Plainfield, N.J. Memorandum to the Plainfield Board of Education on School Enrollments and Building Facilities. November 1961. (mimeographed)

Podesta, Dr. Victor J., Superintendent of Schools, Plainfield, N.J. Superintendent's Report to the Plainfield Board of Education. September 27, 1961. (mimeographed)

This report suggested the formation of the Lay Advisory Committee.

B. Letters

Conneran, James F., Plainfield, N.J. February 24, 1964.

Mr. Conneran's letter was frank and revealing. He discussed the Negro-white split over the school segregation issue. He stressed both groups had made entrenched stands but were willing to retain a dialogue and thereby prevent an internal bolt.

Fields, Mrs. Eva B., Plainfield, N.J. June 5, 1956.

This letter explained to the YMCA Board of Trustees why the NAACP had objected to the reconstruction of the Moorland Branch.

Gale, John P., Plainfield, N.J. February 27, 1964.

Merritt, Dr. Robert W., Plainfield, N.J. February 17, 1964.

Dr. Merritt's pessimistic view of Plainfield's racial problem was representative of liberals who have lost hope.

Nathanson, Rabbi Sidney E., Plainfield, N.J. January 21, 1964.

Rabbi Nathanson gave a frank appraisal of the Jewish community's reaction to his own pro-civil rights stand and to the Plainfield Negro Awakening as a whole.

Plainfield Ministerial Fellowship. Statement of Grievances. Submitted to Mayor of Plainfield, N.J. and Common Council. August 11, 1963. (mimeographed)

The Statement was a compendium of Negro complaints against the Republican administration. It was a good deal more militant in tone than one might have expected.

Slocum, Rev. O. David., Plainfield, N.J. March 7, 1964

The Reverend Slocum was the only one of eight Plainfield Negro ministers to reply to a form letter. His insights were valuable, because he is president of the Plainfield Ministerial Fellowship and not entirely tied to either the older ministers or the activists.

Taub, William P., Plainfield, N.J. January 24, 1964.

Mr. Taub provided some detailed information about full-time Jewish schools in Plainfield which I did not use directly in my paper.

Van Blake, Mrs. Frances S., Plainfield, N.J. February 17, 1964.

Mrs. Van Blake, a Negro, was a member of the Lay Advisory Committee. Her impressions of that group were very interesting.

Wood, L. Cassell, Plainfield, N.J. February 19, 1964.

Mr. Wood, Plainfield's Negro realtor, provided some interesting and reliable information on obstacles to Negro homeownership in Plainfield and his own efforts to integrate various neighborhoods.

C. Contemporary Sources

NEWARK EVENING NEWS, 1963-1964

This source provided good, factual reporting of Plainfield racial stories, often with an insight not evident in the articles of the Courier-News.

PLAINFIELD COURIER-NEWS, 1935-1964.

My utilization of recent issues and old clips differed by necessity. The recent stories, which were more accessible, were valuable, because they presented a good deal of primary material. My use of the old clips was limited by time and the Courier's sporadic records of pre-1948 news and total lack of accessible pre-1961 Negro news. The editorials represent a conservative white point of view. They never try to shape public opinion, but just reflect it. The newspaper lacks a political column about Plainfield, something that could have been of great help.

D. Chronicles

Fields, Mrs. Eva B., Chronicle of Plainfield Branch of NAACP - 1953-1956.

This scrap book presented a picture of NAACP activity, 1953-56.

E. Interviews

Abrams, Norman J., Plainfield, N.J. February 1, 1964.

Mr. Abrams, a former insurgent Republican Councilman, gave me a very interesting analysis of post-war Plainfield politics. I felt he was frank in his estimates of the R.C.A.C. and how its viewpoint affected Plainfield Negroes.

Allen, Rev. Frank W., Plainfield, N.J. Febr. 2, 1964.

Rev. Allen, the local NAACP branch president, provided good background for his reasons for engaging in the school dispute, the reaction of various white groups to his demands and the differences of opinion in the Negro community. He would not, however, clarify internal NAACP division of opinion and his relationship with the entrenched ministry.

Barnes, Mills S., Plainfield, N.J. February 16, 1964.

Mr. Barnes and his wife were of great assistance. Their recollections enabled me to attain some continuity in Plainfield Negro social problems. They were especially helpful on the period between 1929 and the early 1950s. Because some of the information derived from this interview was pure recollection, its reliability and historical documentation is not as good as I would have liked it to be.

Ennis, Joseph, Plainfield, N.J. March 3, 1964.

Hampson, Eugene, Plainfield, N.J. February 14, 1964.
(Courier-News Managing Editor)

Johnson, Elwood C., Plainfield, N.J. February 14, 1964. (Courier-News Reporter)

Klein, Robert R., Supervisor of Education, State of New Jersey, Trenton, N.J. March 16, 1964. (Telephone)

Mr. Klein provided background on old New Jersey State civil rights laws and their effect on Plainfield Negro life.

Kosten, Richard., Plainfield, N.J. March 17, 1964.
(Telephone)

Mr. Kosten commented on labor's lack of political activity in Plainfield and industrial employment of Negroes.

Lattimore, Everett C., Plainfield, N.J. October 8, 1963.

This discussion centered around housing: Plainfield's importance for the prospective Negro homeowner, obstacles to Negro homeownership and places Negroes can buy homes in Plainfield. Many examples are from Lattimore's personal experience.

Lattimore, Everett C., Plainfield, N.J. October 15, 1963.

This talk centered on Plainfield politics and the problems of Negro leadership. This interview was of tremendous value for its own content and for leads it provided. Much of this was personal opinion but highly relevant and provoking.

Lattimore, Everett C., Plainfield, N.J. March 30, 1964.
(Telephone)

The discussion centered on white community attitudes and the role of the Negro in the Plainfield Republican and Democratic Parties.

Maddox, Robert C., Mayor, Plainfield, N.J. March 10, 1964.

Mayor Maddox represents the suburban-oriented commuting Plainfielder and his views on racial relations match that orientation.

Miller, Charles E., Plainfield, N.J. Dec. 27, 1963.

This is the most important single interview of my thesis. Mr. Miller, though a partisan, is an extremely knowledgeable man who has been active in Plainfield interracial affairs. His revelations, many of which I have incorporated in this paper, are reliable and of much value in understanding the Negro Awakening in Plainfield. Mr. Miller is educational chairman of the Plainfield NAACP.

Miller, Charles E., Plainfield, N.J. Jan. 31, 1964.
(Telephone)

Mutnick, George G., Plainfield, N.J. Dec. 18, 1963.

Mr. Mutnick presented the disaffected liberal's point of view on racial relations in Plainfield. As amicus curiae in the Ecker, et.al. appeal, he provided an illuminating diagnosis of the issues at stake.

Scherer, Harold N. Jr., Plainfield, N.J. March 1, 1964.

This was another very valuable talk. It was a summation of the Republican moderate's viewpoint toward the mediation of racial conflict in the city. It also provided some insights into Plainfield's economic outlook. Mr. Scherer is an influential Plainfield GOP Councilman.

Smith, Stewart, Plainfield, N.J. February 14, 1964.
(Courier-News City Editor)

Velinsky, Irving., Plainfield, N.J. Nov. 15, 1963.

Mr. Velinsky provided good, if one-sided, background into intra-party conflicts among Republicans. His views on Negro problems were not very conciliatory and based on fear of financial adversity. Mr. Velinsky is chairman of the Republican City Committee.

Wood, L. Cassell, Plainfield, N.J. March 16, 1964.
(Telephone)

Mr. Wood, a local Negro realtor, explained his aims and how they conflicted with those of his professional associates.

II. Secondary Sources

A. General Analyses

Dobriner, William M. Class in Suburbia. Englewood Cliffs, N.J. Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963.

Dobriner's book was of little help. It emphasized the importance of good schools and ethnic choice in the prospective suburbanite's decision to leave the city.

Dobriner, William M., ed, The Suburban Community. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1958.

Many of the social, political and economic phenomena of suburban living, many of which are applicable to Plainfield, are discussed in this book.

Wood, Robert C., Suburbia: Its People and Their Politics. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1959.

This is a very important book which describes suburban attitudes and problems.

B. Local Histories

Lapsley, Howard G., History of Plainfield. Plainfield: Recorder Press, 1942.

This wretched book provided one ironically good thing: the quote which begins Chapter One.

Plainfield League of Women Voters. This is Plainfield: A Know Your Town Survey, 1954.

Chamber of Commerce of the Plainfields, Plainfield: (N.D.) Plainfield, New Jersey, Beautiful - Progressive.

C. Special Studies

Commission on Community Interrelations of the American Jewish Congress, The. Northtown Survey on Human Relations. Plainfield: 1947.

The American Jewish Congress-sponsored survey served as the factual basis of much of Chapter Two.

Madison, James A., A Survey of Recreational Needs in the 'West End' - Plainfield. The Community Council of the Plainfield Area, 1960.

Ludlow, James M., A Determination of Race Discrimination, Especially in Housing in Plainfield, N.J. Using Selected 1960 Census Tract Data. Providence, R.I.: 1962. Unpublished. (Photo-copy)

This paper, though its content was of small value, provided me with a clue as to how I could study statistical data about Plainfield Negroes.

Plainfield Area Chamber of Commerce. 1961 Public Opinion Survey of the Plainfields. Plainfield: 1961.

Rotival, Maurice E.H., and Assoc., The Plainfield Area: A Survey for the Plainfield Trust State National Bank. Plainfield: Plainfield Trust National Bank, May 1963.

This presentation assisted my understanding of Plainfield, the economic center.

State of New Jersey Interracial Committee, Dept. of Institutions and Agencies. Plainfield - Survey of Negro Life in New Jersey. Report #XX. Newark: August 1932.

This served as the factual basis of most of Chapter One.

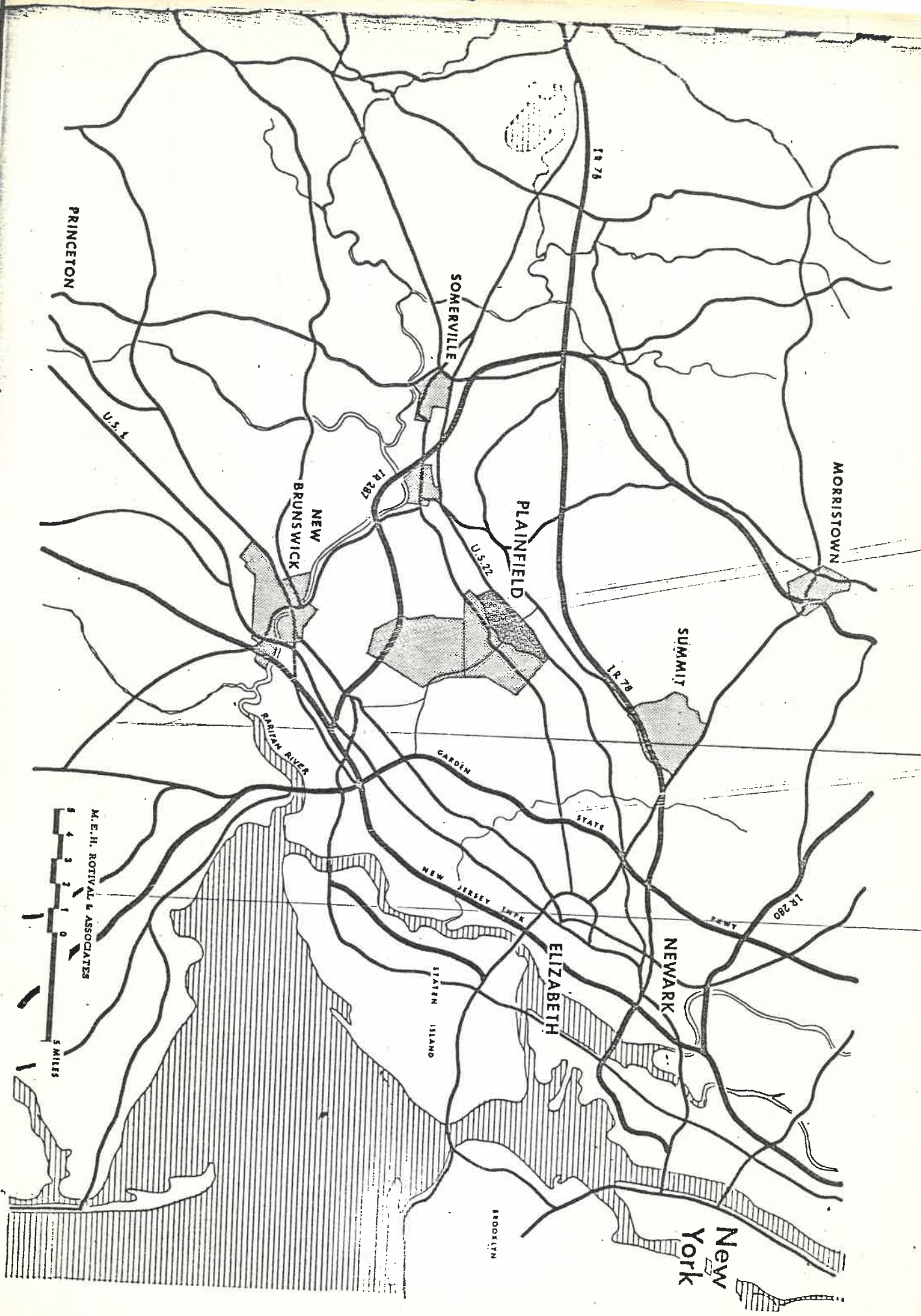
Wolff, Max, A Study of Racial Imbalance in the Plainfield Public Schools: The Facts, Effects and Remedies. Plainfield: Plainfield, N.J., Board of Education, July 1962.

D. Articles

Lattimore, Everett C., "Republicans Fail to Provide Leadership". Plainfield's Changing Times. October 5, 1963.

Amper, Richard. "Both Parties Court the Suburbs in Bid for New Residents' Votes: Suburban, N.J." New York Times, May 31, 1956.

"Jersey's Queen City" Out to Recruit Greater Citizenry. New York Herald, April 9, 1922.



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